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Over now to you

Other PLACES OTHER faces

Argosy knows no frontiers in its search for the best fiction and in its unceasing endeavour to introduce the work of *new* story-tellers wherever they may be found.

In this issue you will find favourite names as the authors of stories with a world-wide flavour — ranging from India to Mexico; from New York to Moscow.

And you will also meet two writers never before published in Britain, although both have great stature abroad.

◆ From America we present *Concho*, the first story to appear here by the most talked-about of the batch of new young writers over there—Tom Mayer. He is regarded in the States as a prime example of the successful "college dropout."

Born in Chicago but now living in New Mexico, next door to Texas, the 21-year-old Mayer left Harvard without completing his studies there. A recent piece in *Esquire* about him said that he "reached a point where he said the hell with college and oddly enough is doing so well today that it is difficult to see where the experience left any scars."

His short stories—usually with a New Mexico background—have appeared in leading American magazines such as the *New Yorker, Harper's* and *Story*. It was *Story Magazine* which in 1963 voted one of his stories as the best college work of short fiction in that year. Another is to be included in the 1965 edition of "O. Henry Prize Stories."

After publication in the States of his first book, "Bubble Gum and Kipling," (from which *Concho* is taken), Mayer has been acclaimed as "a born story-teller," "a young man with a natural gift of narrative, who out of any happening at all can hold the reader transfixed with a written spell." Read *Concho* and we feel you'll agree.

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◆ From Czechoslovakia we have the story *Double Bass Love,* by Jan Werich. Now in his fifties, Werich is little known here but in his own country he has a huge reputation closely akin to that of our Peter Ustinov—as actor, playwright, film star and television personality, whose comic talents give added bite to the serious undertones of his work.

In 1938, Werich teamed up with a colleague in Prague to produce "The Theatre of Liberation," in which the Nazis were the main butt of their satirical sketches. This resulted in his having to move to America, where he lived for six years and appeared in numerous productions on Broadway.

It was there that he first turned his hand to fiction and now he divides his time equally between the theatre and the writing of what he calls "children's stories for grown-ups." *Double Bass Love* is the first of his stories ever to appear in this country.

◆ From Hungary—the talented artist Imre Hofbauer, who did the illustration for *Concho.* Like Werich, he is in his fifties and also had to leave Central Europe because of Nazi reaction to his work. Hofbauer's anti-Nazi cartoons, which he sold to the papers to help pay for his architectural studies at Budapest University, enforced a move from Hungary in 1936 and he came to live in England. His mother says that the margins and endpapers of a faded prayerbook of hers show that he could draw before he could speak. He never had any formal art training, but never stopped drawing. He admits to a great fondness for ski-ing—and a great liking for people, and for anything that moves without being mechanised.

◆ Lastly, Russia—Alexander Jawdokimov, who has illustrated Argosy's serialisation of *Moscow Assignment* from Andrew Garve's thriller, *The Ashes of Loda.* Born in Smolensk, Jawdokimov's childhood was spent in a succession of concentration camps throughout Europe after his family was forced from Smolensk by the German invasion.

One result of this was that he acquired six languages, to which he added English when in 1950 he was transferred from a displaced persons' camp in Germany to England.

He studied art in Somerset before moving up to London, where he now lives in St. Johns Wood in a bachelor flat adorned with balalaikas, guitars, sheepskin hats and other relics of the old Russia.

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There is no sport in the world

CONCHO

by Tom Mayer

"EASY, Concho," I said. "Easy, boy." I let the reins fall on the ground. He was skittish, but he was too good a cow pony to move far.

I got my saddle out of the pickup and set it down on its side. Then I reached in for the blanket. It was dark and I couldn't see much, but finally I found it under the spare tyre. It was a Navajo, so it was folded double. I walked back over to Concho and put my hand on his neck. "Easy, Concho, easy, boy." He moved sideways and pawed a little when I put the blanket on, but then he calmed down and I felt along it for wrinkles.

I went back for the saddle and tripped over a clump of gramma grass. My tripping startled Concho and he neighed. I got the saddle over to him and he jumped about ten feet when I swung it on because the second cinch jingled. I reached under him and found the cinch, but when I began to tighten it he blew himself up. "*Cabron!*" I said to him. Sometimes it works better to swear at a horse in Spanish than English, but not this time because he only blew himself up more, so I said, "Oh, to hell with you." I tightened the cinch hard, but even so I knew I would have to retighten it before I went on or the saddle might slip.

I heard spurs and I saw a man coming out of the dark from over towards the arena. It was Enrique, our foreman. Enrique is a little man with big forearms from years of roping and branding, and he has been with my father for a long time. He taught me most of what I know about horses and there was

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like big-time rodeo

never a better man with cattle. He is good with sheep too, but there was never anyone better with cattle. "*Que pasa, chiquito?*" he said. How's it going? We always speak Spanish to each other.

"*Este caballo es cabron,*" I said. "He's blown up like hell."

"He's nervous," Enrique said.

"*Si,*" I said. "I know, but that doesn't mean he's got to blow himself up this way."

"It doesn't matter. You'll check him twenty times before you ride. You're nervous too."

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"*Es posible.*"

"Anyway, he always blows himself up."

"*Verdad.*"

"Then why complain?"

"I don't know. I'm nervous, I guess, like you said."

"It's nothing to worry about, the nervousness. Afterwards you will forget you ever had it."

I said, "I hope so."

"Do you have the thong?"

"Yes. In my pocket."

"Let me see it."

"It's all right, I think. I checked it."

Enrique said, "*Bueno.* I just wanted to see it. I guess you know if it's strong enough or not."

I reached into my back pocket and pulled out the thong. It was about a yard long, and the leather was smooth on one side and rough on the other. The smooth side was oily. Enrique took it and ran it through his fingers, feeling for tears or weak spots, and then he wrapped the ends around his hands and tested it for strength.

"It's a good thong," he said.

"I thought so."

Just then they switched on the big arena lights, and even back by the corrals where we were you could see pretty well. Concho jumped and I said, "Whoa, easy now, easy, boy."

Enrique laughed. "*No comprende,*" he said. "He doesn't understand how it can be light in the middle of the night."

There was a loud electric click as they turned on the public-address system, and then the announcer's voice came to us very clearly: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen," it said. "And welcome to the Rodeo de Santa Fé, sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce and featuring Butler Brothers livestock, the best in the business. For thrills, chills, spills, and just plain fun for the whole family there's no sport like big-time rodeo, and believe you me, folks, it's always a pleasure to be back here with y'all in this, one of the biggest shows on the big-time circuit . . ."

Concho jumped again at the voice, and I quietened him down.

Concho is a small bay and tough, and there must be some pretty good blood in him somewhere because he has a fine small head. He can start faster than any horse in the state of New Mexico, which was why I was riding him that night, and the only thing wrong with him is that he is a little long through the barrel.

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In the arena the band started playing, and I figured they must have begun the grand march. Enrique was petting Concho, and he said to me, "Be sure you warm him up plenty."

"Don't worry, I will."

"Horse can't start worth a damn if he's not warm."

I heard someone else coming, and it was my father. He had on a tweed jacket and wasn't wearing boots or a hat, so I knew he must have been out to dinner. He has had several heart attacks over the past few years and his face has been the colour of dust ever since the first one.

"*Buenas noches*," he said to Enrique.

"*Buenas noches, jefe.*"

Then he spoke to me. "How's it going?"

"Okay."

"Well, just relax then. We'll be eating square even if you don't win."

I laughed.

The band quit playing, and then started again with something quick and snappy, and then stopped. You could hear the crowd laughing. That would be the rodeo clown.

"How come the good clothes?" I asked my father.

"Your mother and I were out to dinner with Donal McNally and the Ehlingers."

"How's Mac?" I asked. Donal McNally was my father's best friend, and I lived with him sometimes in the winters before I went away to prep school.

"Fine. He and the Ehlingers and your mother are all in the stands."

Somebody set off a string of firecrackers near the arena, and Concho shied again. Enrique said, "*Calma, caballo, calma.*"

"Concho's pretty nervous," I said.

"He's not used to this wild-west stuff," my father said.

"I know, but even so he's pretty skittish."

"You didn't have to use him, you know. You could have used Mentiras or Apple-eye. Mentiras never spooks."

"He also moves about like a freight."

"I know."

"And Concho can start like hell."

My father said, "I know that too. I was just pointing out that it was your decision."

"You thought it was the right thing to do yourself. You said so."

"I still think so."

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"What are we arguing about, then?"

"I don't know... Your mother's awfully nervous about you."

I laughed.

"Have you warmed him up yet?"

"No, not yet. We're not on for another hour or so."

"You want me to wait?"

"Sure. I guess so. I mean if you want to. You probably want to see the show with Mother."

"I'd just as soon stay down here."

The band started playing again, and my father sent Enrique off to get some coffee.

"What lot did you draw?" my father asked.

"Six."

"Third event?"

"Yes."

"What's first?"

"Saddle bronc, then bulldogging."

"I'm sorry I couldn't stay out here with you this afternoon and help."

"It's okay. I didn't have any trouble."

"Just the same, I would have liked to have been here."

My father took out a cigarette and scratched the match on the sole of his shoe. We just stood around for a while and didn't say anything. I played with the thong and then put it back in my pocket and wished there was something I could do. My father went over and put his hand on Concho's withers. I knew he was checking to see if the blanket was centred and if the saddle was far enough forward. Finally he turned around and said, "Where's your rope?"

"In the front seat of the pickup."

"Is it shaken down all right?"

"Yes. It's just right."

Enrique came back with the coffee, and he and my father drank it. I have never liked coffee, even though I have been around camps a lot. We listened to the announcer, and you could tell when a horse came out of the chutes from the noise. Once somebody got hurt because there was a terrific *ooohhh* from the crowd and later, while the ambulance siren was fading off towards town, the announcer said, "That was sure a bit of tough luck for Henry Calhoun, but it's all part of the game..."

My father and Enrique talked about the weather and some stock they were going to move, so I went off and stretched out in the cab of the pickup. I lay there and I could feel my

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stomach shrinking and my chest tightening up, so I got out of the cab and let my rope out. It was well broken in, soft enough so that it was pliable, and still stiff enough so that it would hold a good loop without collapsing. Concho had got used to the crowd noise and the announcer's voice, because he stopped shying every time anything happened, and I coiled my rope again very carefully.

"I guess I'll warm him up," I said.

"Okay," my father said. "Take him out to the road so you won't have any trouble with gopher holes."

"I will."

"You feel okay?" my father asked.

"Yeah, I feel fine."

"That's good."

"Actually I'm scared as hell," I said. "I've never been so scared in my life before."

My father glanced at me and then he laughed. "You're lucky then, if that's all you've had to be scared about. That's all I can say."

"I guess so, but I'm still scared."

"You'll be okay," my father said. "I've got a hell of a lot of confidence in you."

"Thanks, but I wish I had."

"Just relax and let Concho do the work. You're good with the rope and that's the easy part. Just let him do the work."

"I hope so."

"I'm not worried. You'll do fine."

I tied the rope to the right side of the saddle and checked my back pocket to make sure the thong was still there. Then I went around to the left side and put my foot in the stirrup. I twisted it around to the front and Concho started to move right away. His movement swung my leg over easily, just the way it's supposed to, and my foot found the other stirrup.

My saddle is a Mexican saddle, with a big flat horn. My father gave it to me on my fifteenth birthday and I have used it ever since. A lot of American cowboys don't like the big flat horn, but once you've got used to it you can rope just as well, and I like the shallow seat. A deep seat is fine for wrangling or beginners, but if you have to sit in a saddle for a long time a shallow seat is a lot easier on you. Concho crow-hopped once or twice and I could feel the saddle slip.

"I'll meet you over by the chutes," I said. "And see if you can get my number for me, will you? They said they wouldn't give 'em out until just beforehand at the drawings."

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"All right. I'll get it," my father said.

"They didn't tell me what it was going to be, so just give 'em my name."

"Okay."

"Take it easy with him," Enrique said. "But warm him up good."

"*Bueno.*"

I moved off towards the road and Concho crow-hopped a little more. When we got to the road I cantered him up and down, neck-reining him into zigzags and feeling him change leads smoothly and automatically each time. It's very hard to teach a horse to change leads, and some of them never learn. There was a lot of loose gravel on the road and occasionally Concho's hoofs struck sparks. The road was a quarter-mile or more from the arena and the light was very dim. I hoped no cars would come. You could hear the announcer but you couldn't understand anything he said.

Concho has a long thick mane and his tail brushes the ground. His mane and tail are almost black, which is the only thing about his colouring that is distinctive. If we're working him in brush country in the fall where there are burrs, we usually cut off his tail as close as we can and roach his mane, or else they both get to be solid mat of hair and burrs. Because his mane is so heavy Concho always works up a sweat along the side of his neck whether he is in shape or not.

I put my hand under the mane as we were cantering and I could feel the lather forming. I pulled him around very quickly once, and the saddle slipped a little. It wasn't anywhere near ready to turn, though, I knew. Concho is good on neck-reining, but he has a hell of a hard mouth so we always use a Spanish bit on him.

Once in the spring when he hadn't been ridden for a long time, my mother took him out using a snaffle and he ran away with her twice. The first time she got him back, but the second time he dumped her in a piñon bush going all out and she had to walk home. She got scratched up quite a bit, but she wasn't hurt. I stopped him hard once, and he skidded on the gravel. I could feel him keep his weight on his hind legs, which is the mark of a good cow pony. If a horse keeps his weight on his forelegs when he stops hard, in time the strain of roping will spring his knees.

The rodeo grounds are south of town and I could see the vertical red neon sign of the De Vargas hotel. It must be

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about fifty feet tall, and it blinked on and off. Actually there are four sides to it, and they blink one at a time, but it looks as if it is just one side blinking on and off. I could see the lights of Los Alamos and they didn't seem much farther than the De Vargas. It was a clear night and a half moon was rising above the Sangre de Cristos. They are very high mountains and they were black while the sky was only dark blue from the moon.

For the first time that night I began to feel like myself, and as I worked Concho up and down the road I almost forgot about the ride and just concentrated on Concho's changing leads when I neck-reined him. Then I remembered everything, and the tightness came back to my chest. I stopped Concho hard again, and then I got off to tighten the cinch. He was breathing easily and didn't try to blow himself up.

When we got over to the chutes there were a lot of men and horses milling around and the bulldogging was still going on. The officials would work one of the steers into a stock chute, and then they would lift the gate and let a wire fall in front of the cowboy and his horse. I couldn't see much of the arena because there were people sitting all along the fence. Most of them were obviously contestants, because they wore big white cloth patches with black numbers pinned to their backs. Concho didn't like all the confusion so he crow-hopped and shied whenever anyone came near. I figured we might have a tough time getting him into the chute. I saw my father walking towards me and I waved. He had the cloth with my number on it in his hand.

"What number am I?"

"Twenty-seven." He held it up for me to see.

"Have any trouble getting it?"

"No. They had it over at the booth, and all I had to do was ask. Get off, and I'll hold him while you put it on."

"Okay." I got off, and he gave me the number. I couldn't get it on, so I said, "Pin this thing on for me, will you? I can't reach it."

"Sure. Take the horse."

"Be sure you get it straight."

He handed me the reins, and while he was pinning the cloth to the back of my shirt the announcer said, "And that concludes the bulldogging for tonight, ladies and gentlemen, and a rare spectacle it was. One of the most demanding events in rodeo, the bulldogger must be strong as an ox and skilful as a champion wrestler if he's going to do any good. But of

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course sometimes even that doesn't help 'em and the best of them miss or take a painful spill. Next is the calf-roping, a spectacle where the premium is on skill and a fast horse. As most of you know, of course, calf-roping . . ."

"I wish that bastard would shut up," I said. "He's a long-winded bastard."

"The crowd likes him," my father said. "And they do have to have something to fill in between events."

"I guess that's right, but I still don't like him."

"There. Now it's pinned on. You're number six in the event, they said."

"I know. They told me that this afternoon."

"That's right. You told me before."

"Did I?"

"Yes."

The caller came walking by and he yelled, "Calf-ropin'! Numbahs one, three, five, seven, an' nine, use chute one; numbahs two, fo', six, eight, an' ten on chute two. Numbahs one an' two to yo' chutes, otha numbahs stand by."

"You're on chute two," my father said.

There was a sharp clang as the gate went up and the crowd roared. Then the roar changed to an *oohh*. It wasn't an excited *ooohhh* the way it had been when the bronc rider got hurt, but a disappointed sound. "Too bad for Slim Davits, but that happens to the best of 'em. Them li'l dogies are slick folks, believe you me, an' even an expert can miss without hardly half tryin' . . . The next contestant, from La Junta, Colarado . . ."

I was getting nervous as hell and I climbed back on Concho. I got the thong out and began to play with it again.

My father was standing beside me and he said, "You shake the rope out?"

"Yes. It's good and loose, but it'll hold a loop okay."

"Did he blow himself up any?"

"Uh-huh. I tightened the cinch again."

"Good. Is your thong okay?"

"I checked it and Enrique checked it. In fact I've checked it about five times. Enrique thought it was a good thong."

"Fine. You'll do fine."

I laughed. "This sounds like a Cape Kennedy blast-off," I said.

My father laughed at that, but I was nervous as hell. Then the caller came by and yelled, "*Five an' six, to yo' chutes, five an' six, to yo' chutes.*"

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"Okay," I said. "Here goes."

"You'll do fine."

I worked Concho over towards the chute and there were two officials there. The chute was about ten feet long. The dogie would come from behind the fence on the left. The tightness was through my chest and I thought of things that might go wrong. Maybe Concho would trip. Hell, no sense thinking about things like that. Concho balked at the chute gate a little, but I didn't fight him. I thought I could get him in all right. Then one of the officials took him by the bridle and said, "Number six?"

"Yes."

"Name?"

"Gordon. Jerry Gordon."

"From Lincoln?"

"That's right." I gave the name of the town the ranch was near.

"Horse's name?"

"Concho."

"You own him?"

"That's right."

"What's your number?"

"Six. I told you already."

"Not that number. The other one."

"Twenty-seven."

"Okay. It all checks out." He had been taking notes on a pad. "You want him led in?"

"Lemme try first, but maybe we'll have to."

The man stood back and I tried to work Concho into the chute. He balked again and turned around. He skidded sideways a little bit and I began to talk to him soft. "Easy, boy, easy," and I brought him back around, "Easy, easy, we're goin' in now, whoa." He started to balk but then didn't and we went in. They shut the gate behind us right away and Concho shied against the boards. He banged my knee pretty hard and I said, "Easy, you sonofabitch, easy."

The arena was hazy in yellow light out ahead of us and I couldn't see much at all. The grandstands were black and they had scattered sawdust over the arena so that the ground was almost the same colour as the light. It was funny how bright the floodlights had seemed back down at the corrals. I looked over the fence and could see the dogie wedged up tight against the front gate, and out in the arena number five was

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riding back. I wondered whether he had missed or not. He must have been roping while I was looking out at the arena but I didn't remember seeing anything at all. I thought, Hell, I'd better get busy, and I unwound the thong from around my wrist where I had it and put it between my teeth. I undid the rope and put the coils in my left hand with the reins, and then I shook out a loop. The rope felt good.

Concho had calmed down and I was wondering how the dogie would break, when I heard the announcer saying, "And the next contestant, a New Mexican, is Jerry Gordon from the Torreon ranch in Corona. He's up on his own horse named Concho." I felt a hand on my shoulder and when I looked around it was Enrique. He grinned and said, "*Buena suerte, chiquito.*" Good luck. I just smiled back because the thong was between my teeth.

Then I heard the official behind me ask, "Ready?"

I nodded, and the dogie chute clanged open. I kicked Concho hard, but I needn't have because he started like dynamite. The dogie angled left away from us and as I swung the loop out the first time Concho moved over behind him at top speed to get him on my right. Concho was hard on top of the dogie and I had the loop swinging open and easy, waiting for the dogie to angle back. If it broke hard right we were dead unless I made a very lucky throw, and if it got to the left fence we were dead too because we could never get it out fast enough for a good time.

The dogie was being obstinate about it, and it tried to sprint for the fence, but Concho was faster. He went flat out for a jump or two—I could feel his muscles bunching under me each time—and then the dogie was beside my right stirrup for a second and I was afraid the loop would hit him or that he would break sharp, because Concho had taken a long shot in getting up alongside him so far. Then the dogie angled right and Concho angled after him and I threw.

It felt good and I knew we had him and snapped the slack of the rope around the horn twice, being careful not to tangle the reins while I did it. It was a good throw and I knew we had him the instant I let the loop go—the way you always know, if you have roped much, whether the throw is good or not in that bare second when you snap your wrist hard and watch the loop float out away from you. The loop settled over the dogie's head, and I didn't see it snap tight and pick him up in the air and slam him down hard on his back as Concho stopped dead inside of a stride, as I was swinging off.

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I tripped in the deep sawdust as I hit the ground but I didn't fall, and then the thong was slapping at my face as I ran towards the dogie while Concho kept it flat on its back by backing up himself and dragging it at the end of the rope. I ran down the rope to the dogie and let it up and knocked it down again and dropped on it with one knee and grabbed the forelegs and one hind leg. You can use any three legs, but the two front ones are the weakest, so you always get them if you can. I had wrapped the thong around once and then twice, when the dogie kicked me in the face with his free hoof, but I went around the third time and then down and under and over and around again, the way Enrique had taught me, and then I jumped clear and waved my arms so that they would stop the watches.

The crowd was making a lot of noise, but that was the first time I had noticed it. As soon as I stood back Concho started to drag the dogie again, and one of the judges rode up and said, "Get the rope off him."

I went back to the dogie and put my knee on it so that Concho would quit dragging and worked the rope off. The dogie was lying still and I thought he might be dazed from the way Concho had pulled him up short. The judges let the dogie lie there for fifteen seconds to see if he could work free, and then they signalled, *Fair Catch* to the announcer's booth.

"*Fifteen seconds*," the announcer said. "A mighty fine time for Jerry Gordon. Yessirree, a mighty fine time. The next contestant is . . ."

Fifteen seconds. "Good boy, Concho you old *cabron*, good boy." Fifteen seconds was in the money no matter what. I ran my hand underneath his mane to feel the lather, and then, very suddenly, I felt wonderful. There was some blood on my cheek where the dogie had kicked me and I felt like tipping my hat to the crowd and cantering Concho all over the arena in crazy zigzags, showing them how well he changes leads.

I felt so wonderful I forgot to coil the rope, and when I got back to the gate the official said, "Nice ride, son," and the rope got wound around his foot and tripped him pretty hard. He untangled himself and then there were Enrique and my father running towards me.

Enrique was grinning like a madman, and when I got down he gave me a big *embrazo*. "*Ai, chiquito*," he said. "*Eres muy hombre.*"

My father's face was grey and drawn, but he took my hand and said, "You did fine, Jerry, *just fine.*" © Tom Mayer 1965

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HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

His sensitive conscience hated that guilty feeling

COSTELLO came out of the tube station and saw the flower stall locked up for the night and said, "Oh, my God!" in sudden recollection.

Their tenth wedding anniversary. He had tied a knot in his handkerchief as a reminder as he passed this same stall yesterday. He felt in his pocket for the handkerchief and found it there, still cleverly knotted. And he was two hours late into the bargain.

Costello stepped from one aching foot to the other and tried to think what to do about this. He was a detective sergeant at New Scotland Yard. His feet hurt because he had been on them most of the day, and his head hurt because a man had hit it with a starting handle. A long, horrible day, starting at 5 a.m. when he had been dragged out of his bed to go chasing off to Southend.

There was a bit of plaster stuck on his head, but he had combed his hair so that Rose wouldn't see it. He had taken three aspirins in his office before leaving, but the head still throbbed abominably. Rose hated his job anyway; had been at him for over a year to get some nice safe, steady transfer. Eight o'clock. What in the name of heaven could he get her at this time of night?

Wanting nothing more in life than to get his head down and his feet up, Costello nonetheless took a turn round the block and tried to devise a way out of his difficulties. A long conference with the superintendent about his transfer? But two hours was a long time to confer about a change of job. Particularly on their wedding anniversary. And how was it he'd brought her nothing? Say he'd ordered something special.

But he knew he'd never carry it off, not with his head aching

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like this; she'd see through it in a flash. And what was this mysterious something supposed to be, anyway? Best to tell her the truth. Look, Rosie darling, I've had a terrible day... been on the go all the time... no lunch. I meant to get you something, but what with one thing and another. You know I love you—it doesn't need a bunch of flowers to tell you that...

Costello sighed as he trudged along on his hot, sore feet. None of this stuff was any use. An anniversary was an anniversary. A woman had a certain view about these things, it stuck in her memory, made you feel guilty for years.

He had a sensitive conscience, hated that guilty feeling. He hadn't hit that little so-and-so today—though he was fully entitled to—because he knew he would feel guilty afterwards. Just given him a jab with the elbow. The fellow had damn near killed him. And what would he get out of it? A paragraph in the local paper.

Ah, Rose was right. It was no job for a family man. Dangerous criminals, terrible men, animals... You went in a room, the fellow knew he was caught, but hit you anyway. Just like that. A bit harder and Rose would be collecting the pension. And the kids. They were calling him Hunter now. Something they'd got out of a book; the famous detective, hunter of men. Hunter! It tickled him all the same.

But this was getting him nowhere; thoughts going round and round in his tired brain. Ah, for a nice strong cup of tea. And then for no reason he thought of the snug little kitchen at the back of Mr. Goldsmith's sweet-shop. As a constable on the beat years ago, he used to slip in for a cup. Still got his cigarettes there. Always home, old Goldsmith; arthritic wife. And in the same moment, with a flash of inspiration, he thought—sweet shop. A nice big box of chocolates, the ones she liked with liqueur centres.

Costello turned cheerfully round in the street, his feet given a new lease of life by this miraculous scheme. The shop was shut, of course, and he went down the side alley, felt over the fence for the catch, and entered the dark backyard. In the light coming through the curtains he saw the packing cases and empty sweet jars outside the back door.

He knocked on the door, and waited, smiling in the dark. Movements inside. He could imagine old Goldsmith laying down his paper, looking at his wife.

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He waited a minute or two but nothing happened, so he knocked again. All at once, the little yard went black. The light had been switched off in the room. Costello waited, listening. It had gone very quiet inside. He knocked again and called, "Hullo, Mr. Goldsmith. It's me, Costello."

Silence. Queer, thought Costello, and put his ear to the door. A quiet, snuffling sound. He couldn't quite place it. Not a dog. They didn't have a dog. He listened intently, holding his breath. And then, a slight creak, the snuffling again, and he had it. Shoe-leather; and clothing brushing against the door. Someone was standing there, just inside.

Costello felt the hairs on the back of his neck begin to prickle, and he had a sharp instinct to get out of this—double up the alley, back to the safety of the street. He had been hit on the head once today. And there was a police station five minutes away. But a lot could happen in five minutes.

He was still holding his breath, and his head began to throb again so savagely that white flashes came before his eyes. He moved from one painful foot to the other, trying to think. It couldn't be old Goldsmith in there; he had given his own name . . . and the old boy knew his voice. Instinct and experience both told him what manner of man it was who waited silently behind that door.

Fatigue and pain had made his brain sluggish. He couldn't think what to do. Some weapon, a piece of wood, a jar. He groped in the blackness. The packing cases were solid, nothing that came away easily. A glass jar, then. He couldn't get the top off the first one, tried another. It untwisted with a squeak. He held it in his hand, fingers inside, thumb out.

He tried the door gently, found it bolted, and rattled the door handle.

He thought he heard a mutter inside and waited, bottle poised.

A man's voice said, "Who is it?"

The police, Costello almost said, and then swiftly caught himself. If he said that they would either stay put, waiting for him to go and call for help, or they would rush him. No need to make them more desperate. He had to get in there.

"The doctor," he said. "I come every Wednesday to see Mrs. Goldsmith. Who's that?"

Muttering again. "The electrician," the voice said. "There's some trouble with the lights; I'm seeing to the fuses. Could you come back later, Doctor?"

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"I can't. I've got a torch. I just want to see her."

A pause then, and the bolt was drawn. "Come in if you want to, then, Doctor."

The door was slightly ajar. Costello pushed it with his foot, tightened his sweaty grip on the glass jar, and blundered into the room, head and shoulders bent.

He heard the blow descending, a subdued whirring, but his head at least was out of the way. It caught him on the shoulder, a sickening, jarring shock that numbed him. He twisted stiffly, holding his breath with the pain, and felt quickly in the dark with his left hand. He encountered an arm, followed it up to the neck, and in the same moment hit out with the glass jar with all his strength.

A thump, the jar smashing; noise and struggling.

"Put on the light!" he yelled. "Mr. Goldsmith, put on the light if you can." He thought he must have put paid to the man he had hit. He could hear groaning some distance away; Goldsmith, probably.

An arm was round his waist, another scrabbling round his face. He twisted in the grasp and used his knee. No contact. Off balance, he stumbled over something on the floor and went down heavily, the other man on top of him.

The man was swearing viciously in his ear and had an elbow in his neck. A big, strong fellow, solid, odorous. Costello moved urgently beneath him, all fatigue gone now. A hand came down over his nose and mouth, and he bit it as hard as he could, not letting go.

He heard a gasp and the elbow began to pummel almost beyond endurance. Costello hung on with his teeth as the hand twisted and tugged to release itself, the fingers clawing, bruising his face. The man was now shouting with pain. Costello bit harder, twisting himself out from under, and was on his knees when the light came on . . .

He was kneeling on a fallen body, and the first thing he saw was a length of gas piping that the fellow must have hit him with. Two of them. He released his hold on the hand, fell on the piping and turned, grasping it.

The other fellow was holding his hand, face grey with pain. Costello got up, shut the yard door with his back and stood facing him, panting.

"Sit on the floor," he said. "Next to him."

The man did so, silently. Beyond him, Costello saw Mr. Goldsmith standing white and shaken in the doorway by the light switch.

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"Mr. Costello!" the old man said. "Thank God, you've come. They tied up my wife. They tied her up on the bed and gagged her. They hit me on the head."

"Ring for the police," Costello said. "Dial 999, Mr. Goldsmith."

He was trembling all over now, a repetition of Southend earlier today. He wanted to sit down but daren't yet. The man whose hand he had bitten had the ugly animal look he knew so well. A big, dangerous animal, glaring up at him, ready to spring. The safest thing would be to knock him out right away with the gas pipe, but Costello could not do it.

"Make a move and you'll regret it," he told him. "I'm a police officer. Just sit tight."

The man swore at him. Costello heard Mr. Goldsmith phoning from the next room, and then the creak of bed springs and the old lady crying as her husband released her. A wave of nausea came over him then for these savages who broke in and hurt and took what they wanted. He hoped for a swift moment that the man would make some tentative move so that he could hit him.

But the man must have sensed this mood in him, for he sat there, making no move, only glaring. His unconscious friend came to in a few minutes and sat up, rubbing his head and swearing. Costello told him to be quiet. He felt as sick as a dog himself. The man he had bitten must have had some dirty grease on his hands; he could taste it in his mouth. He prayed for the police car to come quickly.

It did not come a moment too soon. As soon as the officers were inside the door, Costello rushed to the sink and vomited. He sat down at last, feeling acutely ill. He didn't think he had ever felt quite so awful in all his life, head throbbing, his shoulder stiff and bruised, his neck and face sore.

The police sergeant asked if he would come to the station with them, and Costello agreed. He was about to ask if they would run him home afterwards, but he recollected then why he had come here in the first place; it would look decidedly odd if he were to leave with a large box of chocolates, as if it were a gift from the grateful shopkeeper. He would have to come back again.

He was half an hour at the station; had a cup of tea and a wash there. Nine o'clock, he saw, as he left. Three hours late for what remained of their anniversary. But he felt so battered and aching now that he was beyond contrition.

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He had mentioned to Mr. Goldsmith that he would be returning, and why, and the box was waiting for him, already wrapped. The old fellow was wound up to talk and talk, but Costello, scarcely able to keep his eyes open, made a quick departure.

And then, thank God, he was on the way home. Rose, the kids, enfolding warmth, order. As his feet jogged the last few yards, he thought to himself, Well, Hunter, you've had some day . . . hunter of men. He was filled with a tremendous distaste for his job, tangible almost, like the taste of the burglar's foul hand in his mouth. Squalor, filth, dregs of humanity, ever-present danger. Why did he do it?

And then, fatigue making him light-headed, he had a sudden vision of himself, as though through some cleft in the confused turmoil of the day; a sharp, distinct picture that he had never seen before. He saw himself returning home along the quiet street—not a hunter but a shepherd, protecting a flock. He had the keenest sensation of himself at that moment and knew that, tired and off-balance as he might be, it was true . . .

Costello paused at his gate, deeply impressed by this revelation. Rows and rows of quiet houses, quiet families, his own among them, and around—the ugly animals. He knew them, hated them, had a compulsion to stop them; something that sprang from his own need for order and a quiet conscience. Rose must have known this, and feared it. He knew now why he had not asked for a transfer.

Costello shook his head wryly. Home, Hunter, he said to himself. No need to get airy-fairy because of a couple of bashings.

He was too tired to be circumspect and went right into the living room, coat and hat still on, with the box of chocolates held in front of him. Rose was knitting as she watched the television in front of the fire, and he bent and kissed her and said humbly, "I'm sorry, Rosie. Sorry I'm so late, tonight especially."

She didn't say anything, and he sat down in the other chair, too tired even to take off his coat, and watched, smiling wearily, as she opened the parcel.

She came over to him after a minute and sat on his knee, warm and soft from the fire, and nuzzled his face.

"Tired?"

"M'hm."

"Eaten?"

"I don't want anything. Stay here."

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"What crimes have you got on your conscience?"

"None," he said, resting his head on her bosom, home at last. "None at all, dearest."

"It's the first time you've been on time with your present. It's not till tomorrow, you know."

"Tomorrow?" he said, and stretched his head back to look at her. "How do you mean, tomorrow?" But he saw in the same moment the mistake he had made. That knot in his handkerchief—he had tied it as he passed the flower stall at 5 a.m. this morning, not yesterday; this morning, the early, forgotten part of this same, long horrible day.

"Regretting your apology now?" she asked, smiling at his stupefaction.

"No. No," he said, still working it out. There had been no need for him, then, to go round to old Goldsmith's place, no need to get hurt again. But he didn't regret that, either. Someone had to do these things. He knew he would go on doing them. There would be plenty of apologies he'd still have to make to Rose . . .

So he settled his head back on her bosom and closed his eyes and said softly, "No regrets at all, Rosie sweetheart. Happy tomorrow, ten times over," and fell asleep like that.

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COMEDY OF ERRORS

A comedy of "classified" errors from a California paper:

MONDAY: "R. D. Smith has one sewing-machine for sale. Phone 958 after 7 p.m. and ask for Mrs. Kelly who lives with him cheap."

TUESDAY: "We regret having erred in R. D. Smith's classified ad yesterday. It should have read: 'R. D. Smith has one sewing-machine for sale. Cheap. Phone 958 and ask for Mrs. Kelly who lives with him after 7 p.m.'"

WEDNESDAY: "R. D. Smith informs us he has received several annoying telephone calls because of an incorrect classified ad in yesterday's paper. It should have read: 'R. D. Smith has one sewing-machine for sale. Cheap. Phone 958 after 7 p.m. and ask for Mrs. Kelly who loves with him.'"

THURSDAY: "NOTICE. I, R. D. Smith, have no sewing-machine for sale; I smashed it. Don't call 958. The phone has been taken out. I have not been carrying on with Mrs. Kelly. Until yesterday, she was my housekeeper."

FRIDAY: "R. D. Smith wishes to hire a housekeeper. Phone 958. Good pay. Usual housekeeping duties. Love in."

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Sarada

by Chalam

THE drama went on endlessly, like an old woman on her death-bed, unwilling to die. We sat till the ghastly end, enjoying the full value of the three annas we had paid for a seat on the floor. It was four in the morning when we came out of the theatre-hall.

"I can't sleep now. Let's take a dip in the river and then find a good coffee house."

We crossed the canal bridge at the Rama Mohan Library and walked along the high bund between the Krishna river and the Bandar canal. On our left hand the city was breathing in oblivion, and on our right the river sands were sleeping under the soft moonlight. The summer river, winding between the hills, shone like sweat on Nature's bosom. The early morning breeze wafted fragrance from the mango trees.

"What's that flame?"

"A burning corpse."

"Oh! People often report seeing ghosts. I've never seen one. Have you?"

"Well, I can tell you a ghost story."

"I don't care for a story now. If I meet a ghost at all, I want to meet a lusty female one."

"What for?"

"For a taste of that experience."

"What pleasure could you get out of unreal shadows?"

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"Are all these men and women here real? And is their affection more true?"

"But women devils suck out your blood."

"Aren't real women as bad?"

We were interrupted then. A teenage boy who had been walking behind us, evidently following our idle talk, said, "Sirs, two years ago a curious incident occurred in our village. Have you time to listen?" We were in no hurry. We sat down with him on the broad bund.

His story was fascinating enough to keep our eyelids from succumbing to the alluring embraces of the cool morning breezes.

A young village officer maintained a beautiful girl in my village two miles distant from his, the boy told us. I am still his farm servant. He is an influential man and big people court his favour during election time. Wishing to keep his liaison from the public eye, he would go to her regularly after dark twice a week and depart before daybreak.

I had to pass her cottage every day on my way home. When my master was too busy to go to her on the expected day he would send word to her through me on my way home in the evening. And whenever I knocked she would jump up and open the door in glee. How disappointed she was whenever she saw that it was only me!

In a short time she came to know me and took me into her confidence. She led a lonely life and, consequently, would often stop me to talk about the village affairs and scandals. She inquired after my master's family, his business, and his influence over the local officials. On nights when she expected her lover she would keep hot water, hot meat dishes, sandal paste and flower garlands ready. When I had to report that he was not coming she would ask me in a semi-rueful tone, "What am I to do with all these things now?"

Sometimes she would give me a dish to take home to eat. Sometimes she would feed me in her lord's place and I would eat those rare viands, wondering at the way of this rich man who would forgo the embraces of such an attractive girl for business and self-glorification.

Then it was her birthday. My master sent her a costly sari as a present. Although it was not the day for his regular visit, she sent word that she expected him that night. When I told her in the evening that the Minister had sent my master away to Madras on confidential business, painful emotions showed in

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her beautiful face. She had taken an oil bath and her long shining hair streamed from her back into the sweeping breeze. Her full breasts heaved with the motion of a dark cloud ready to burst into violent storm.

It was a calm evening. The sky gazed down in admiration at the patient earth that she nurtured with light... In the garden where she stood, yellow evening flowers on the vegetable creeper welcomed me, and the fugitive perfume of freshly opened *chandrakant* flowers floated between us. In the slime beside the well grew the *chama* on whose slippery leaves water drops glowed like rubies in the waning light. Dim shadows descended on to earth like slow drooping eyelids on love-tired eyes. I gazed at her in innocent rapture.

"What are you looking at?" she asked me.

"At poor, disappointed you."

Her underlip trembled helplessly at my sympathy. She shook off her gloom, smiled and said, "Come along, we'll have supper."

"*We?*"

That night I slept where I supped, and I crumpled her birthday present under nervous fingers... From that night on she knew no disappointment.

Miserable master—I cogitated in her divine arms—he sets such value on his reputation in public and the good opinion of the State Ministers! If I were he I would snap my fingers in the face of wealth and fame for such a woman's kisses. Yet the village teacher says that the Ministers, too, have their own seductive paramours. And it is these ladies who dictate government orders.

One day, I had to get up very early to go on an errand to a neighbouring village. The previous night my master had been expected at Sarada's cottage, so I spent the evening with her, and all through the night I was partly chuckling and partly jealous to think of my master in my place on her bed.

I woke up at three in the morning and started out. A big moon was throwing long shadows on the lonely road. A chill wind was sweeping from the acacia that glowered darkly on my left. I could hear the merry ringing of the tiny bells on the bullocks' necks as they dragged heavy hay-laden carts along the road.

At a distance I saw a woman sitting on the parapet wall of a culvert. There was something about her that called remembrance. I shivered for no reason. I went nearer and was suddenly startled. It was Sarada. Her loose hair covered her

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back and shoulders and flowed down on to the wall. I remembered she had braided her hair with *ketaki* flowers the evening before. She had on the same white crêpe sari that she had received as a birthday present, and the same muslin blouse.

She did not look up at my approach, she just sat there weeping, covering her face with her palms. Tears trickled down her elbows, dropping like dew-pearls from lotus petals.

"Sarada! What's the matter?" I cried.

She jumped up, wiped her tears. "There are the carts approaching," she whispered. "Come aside." And she took me along a by-path between half-grown trees. The path led to a forest. We walked for five minutes, she in front and I following. I finally stopped her.

"Tell me," I said, "I'm worried. What is it?"

"Come farther."

"No, I won't go a step farther."

"Oh, my beloved! How shall I tell you? Soon after you dragged yourself off from my couch, he came. Some thrice-cursed person had informed him against us. He thrashed me to death, drove me out, and went in a rage in search of you, vowing that he would murder you on the spot."

I was stunned and speechless . . .

After a long while I said, "What shall we do now?"

"Why, we will go to town and live there quietly. Come."

"Where to?"

"To the railway station. We have to cross the forest."

Her suggestion was too abrupt. I was not prepared for it. My mind was incapable of thinking coherently.

"Come, quick," she said. "You'll be murdered if you delay."

"But . . ."

"Walk along. We can talk on the way." And she walked off and I followed meekly. I strained my mind to master the situation. How could we live in that town? Where was the money? What would my mother say?

I looked at her and shivered. There was something uncanny about her. Yet, my senses swooned at the sight of her swaying buttocks and the swing of her long, tapered arms. I wished I could catch her and force her to sit down on the green grass in the solitary lane. I walked fast to stop her with a grip on her shoulder. But she walked faster as though she had guessed my intention. I got suspicious. It was still night, the moon was throwing my shadow on her back. She was walking deftly, swinging herself away from the thorny bushes.

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I cried out, "Stop!"

She halted and turned round. I went near, looked her up and down. Tears glistened on her smooth cheeks like stars on a sloping sky. If only I could kiss them away! Yet, I shivered at the thought.

"Who are you?" I whispered.

She looked at me miserably. My bowels tightened. That look was not earthly. It was a stare beyond all hope. In an intensely sad voice she asked, "Don't you know me?"

"No, I don't. Who are you?"

Suddenly she burst into shrill peals of laughter that sounded as if they came from slimy tombs, from between fleshless lips. They sounded like the rattling of dried bones . . .

I shook. I was certain her paramour had murdered her earlier that night. Poor Sarada! My Beloved! You have come to see me before you depart from the earth for ever. My poor darling! Love, that death could not kill!

But I was still alive in flesh and blood. What were her intentions? How could I bear her cold touch? How could I escape now?

I wished very much to turn and run. Yet, what was there to fear, I argued. She loves me, she won't hurt me. But when I looked at her, I was frightened. There was no love in her eyes. I decided to touch her and make sure. I lunged towards her and stretched my hand into the hair hanging over her shoulder.

She slipped from my clutch and said laughing, "Come along." And I followed her as if mesmerised.

We were in the forest, my heart thumping with fear lest she should catch and devour me in the shadows. I wondered why I was so terrorised by Sarada who had nestled in my arms last evening.

"Oh darling, life of my heart, have you turned into a ghost, Sarada?"

"Don't talk," she whispered. "Come to the thicket on the canal bank. It is quiet and lovely there."

We crossed the wooden plank of a bridge, and neared the dark tamarisk thicket. She crawled under the branches and motioned me there in an irresistible way. I was now mortally afraid.

"No," I said.

"Come, darling, come on into the alluring bosom of your love. Come."

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"No. You come out."

"But why? This is our love-tryst for the morning."

"Poor Sarada, did he kill you?"

"Kill? Who killed me? Why should anyone kill me?"

"I know you were murdered. Did he torture you, poor girl?"

"Who?"

"Why do you lie to me, you frightful spirit?"

She cried in rolling sobs. I could stand no more. I was not sure of my power of resistance. I ran away and never looked back...

How I reached the village I do not know. I went straight to her cottage. I must at least see her dead body before they took her away.

The moon had set, yet it was dark still. The door was not latched. There was no lamp. I went to the bed with faltering steps, my heart thumping loudly. She lay sprawled on the bed, her eyes open in a ghastly stare. Perfume from her face cream and *ketaki* flowers floated from her. I fell upon her in uncontrollable grief.

Then, I heard a triumphant laugh! Two arms clutched at my neck and pressed down my head. Oh, my God, the wicked ghost had got me after all! My last moments had come. I bleated in terror like a slaughtered goat. I pushed her away with all my might, and ran out into the street.

The ghost called out, "What is it, beloved? Are you hurt?"

I ran swiftly, turning back to see if she followed me.

She came and stood at the door. Could it be true? Was she indeed alive? The familiar surroundings soon dispelled the nightmare from my mind. She came near, took me inside, gave me something refreshing to drink, did what she could to avert the bad effects of the evil-eye and asked me to tell her why I was so frightened.

At first, I was too agitated to speak coherently, and I trembled with fear. Gradually, reassured by her endearments, I relaxed. When I told her the story she did not believe it was true. She thought I had invented it to alarm her, or that I had had a bad dream. But when she realised I was speaking the truth, at every step she would bow to God who rescued me from a grave danger. She would be indignant with the evil apparition, as she called it, and invoke horrible curses on its head. "Anyhow," she explained, "how could you think I would do you harm, even if I were murdered and became a ghost? Yet it was that fear that saved you from its lust. Who

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could it be? I am sure it was my aunt. She resembled me. She was jilted cruelly and threw herself into a well and died a horrible death. I am sure it was she. Promise me on my life that you will not go out after dark. Don't laugh. Promise."

I then told myself it was all an hallucination. But that afternoon, the cartman Seshanna asked me, "Brother, who was that woman seated on the culvert at dawn? You were talking to her. Who was she?

"It took me some time to get back to my normal state. Today I am here on my master's business, and I am taking this chocolate tin to *her* as a gift. I often think that she was not a ghost, but some pretender from somewhere. What do you think of it, sirs?"

We rose and stretched.

"What do we think? For me," I said, "I wish I could be in your shoes."

We laughed and got up to go to the river.

The young villager went on his way.

"An extraordinary experience," I said. "Do you still doubt that there are ghosts?"

"Are you sure that he did not invent the whole story?"

"Including the lady in the cottage?"

We joked further.

But when we passed the burning *ghat*, we were not as bold as men ought to be.

© Gudipati Venkatachalam 1964

Gudipati Venkatachalam, early in his writing career, found his stories too short and his name too long. So he compromised and wrote longer stories and shortened his surname to the last two syllables — Chalam. Editors were delighted!

A schoolteacher by profession, Chalam recently retired to Madras to spend more time writing which he usually does in his native language, Telugu. This is in no way a drawback, for he can speak several other languages and does his own translations— Sarada being one of them.

His many stories, novels and plays have won him international prestige and acclaim as one of the brightest literary stars of India.

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Spring

FEVER

Spring beckons! All things to the call respond;
The trees are leafing and cashiers abscond.

AMBROSE BIERCE

Spring's Delights are now returning!
Doctors now are blithe and gay!
Heaps of money now they're earning,
Calls they're making ev'ry day.
Ev'ry shepherd swain grows colder,
As, in vain, he tries to sing;
Feels he now quite ten years older
'Neath the blast of blighting Spring!
Though we're doubtful of the issue,
Let us bravely shout Hurrah!
And in one superb A-tishoo!
Sneeze and warble, Tra-la-la!

JOSEPH ASHBY-STERRY, 1882

Spring-clean

Spring is beautiful and smells sweet. Spring is when you shake the curtains, and pound on the rugs, and take off your long underwear, and wash in all the corners. Spring is when the carpet tacks come up, and all the blinds come down. In the spring horses and mules have colts, and Tillie Unger has a baby . . . Spring is when you draw a circle in the dirt with your finger, if you don't have a stick and win all of the boys' marbles. My mother rubs lemon on her hands to make them white. I rub salt on my shooting thumb to make it tough. Spring is when you put ladders up high and scrape out gutters, and when you put ladders down low and clean out cisterns . . .

VIRGINIA CARY HUDSON, *O Ye Jigs and Juleps!*

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April Gossips

Spring bursts impertinently
Into Moscow houses.
Moths flutter from behind the wardrobe
And crawl on summer hats,
Fur coats are hidden away in trunks.

In the windows of the wooden storeys
Stand pots of stock and wallflower,
The rooms breathe a spacious open-air scent
And the attics smell of dust.

The street makes friends
With the bleary window,
The white night and the sunset
Are inseparable by the river.

In the passage can be heard
What's going on outdoors
And April's casual gossip
With the dripping waters of the thaw . . .

BORIS PASTERNAK, *The Earth*

Scented Serenades

Spring has come once more. The air is full of it. The ginestra is in bloom, the myrtle is budding, the vines are sprouting, flowers everywhere. Roses and honeysuckle are climbing the stems of the cypresses and the columns of the pergola. Anemones, crocuses, wild hyacinths, violets, orchids, cyclamens are rising out of the sweet-scented grass. Clusters of Campanula gracilis and deep-blue Lithospermum, blue as the Blue Grotto, are springing out of the very rock. The lizards are chasing each other among the ivy. The tortoises are cantering about singing lustily to themselves—perhaps you do not know that tortoises can sing? The sacred mountain above San Michele is full of birds on their way home to mate and rear their young . . .

AXEL MUNTHE, *The Story of San Michele*

The Mating Game . . .

Men are the devil—they all bring woe.
In winter it's easy to say just "No."
Men are the devil, that's one sure thing,
But what are you going to do in spring?

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES

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Bustin' Out All Over!

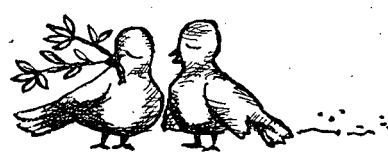
You work and work, and keep on working,
While poets, even worse, are shirking;
Your hair falls out, your eyes grow bleary,
Your bones grow old, your outlook dreary;
But you never seek to break the fetters—
You go on filing useless letters.
Well, a day arrives, and it must be spring yet;
The birds, somehow, begin to sing yet;
The grass is green, the cows are mooing,
The flies are buzzing, the people shooing,
The air is fresh—it makes you tipsy—
And, all of a sudden, you turn gipsy.
So you come in late, you go home early;
The thought of the office makes you surly;
You come in later, you go home earlier;
The thought of the office makes you surlier;
You've worked enough; you've earned the leisure
To have some poor, but honest pleasure;
No desk, you think, should rise and quell you—
And what do you get? Do I have to tell you?

SAMUEL HOFFENSTEIN

Sweet Lovers

The smell of the sweet, warm grass steeped their bodies through: and when they rode through a lane of crimson hawthorn, he remembered with a tide of rising exaltation that two days from now would be the first of May. They would keep their Vigil of Venus in the woods . . . The April rains had left the valley of the Loire bewitched between wood and water: he would lay her in a forest pool to see how golden she was in the brown water, and carry her from it to worship her whiteness on the grass. Their minds burnt with love as their bodies with the sun; they hardly felt the chill shadow of the walls of the Abbey as they rode past Charlemagne's tower . . .

HELEN WADDELL, *Peter Abelard*



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He's trying to frighten me . . . she thought

DECOY

by C. L. Sweeney, Jr.

BRADY stopped just inside the door, letting it close behind him, taking the room and its contents in with a quick practised sweep of his hard grey eyes. It was pine-panelled, dimly lit and intimate, a bar running down one side, a row of booths down the other, a cluster of tables at the far end.

He saw her at once. She was at the farthest of the tables, where she had been told to meet him, her coat thrown back over her chair, looking small and trim and very much alone in her new, white, nurse's uniform.

Small and trim and alone and probably a little frightened, too, Brady thought. Like the white pigeon they'd tethered out in the field one day when he was a boy on the farm, a decoy to lure a marauding hawk within range of their guns. The hawk had come in and the guns had blazed and the hawk had screamed and fallen, but it had been too late. Too late to save the decoy, too late to stop the cruel talons from raking and piercing the soft white body. Brady still remembered how it had looked, crumpled and stained and broken at his feet. He looked at the girl. He hoped it wouldn't be too late this time.

He caught himself and shrugged, trying to dislodge the picture from his mind, telling himself that this wasn't the same thing at all. She wasn't an innocent decoy. She was only a cop getting paid for a job, the same as he was, and when you joined the department you accepted chances like this as part of it. Nobody made you join. Man or woman, he told himself, there wasn't any difference. You asked for it, you got it. There wasn't any difference.

He told himself that, knowing all the time that there *was* somehow a difference, knowing that there was something within him that rebelled against using a girl as bait for a sex-hungry

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killer, knowing that he would never have asked for her if there was any possible alternative.

He thrust his big hands deeper into the pockets of his gabardine raincoat and walked across the room to her. It was the mid-afternoon lull and the place was almost deserted. Two young men with crew cuts, probably interns from the hospital nearby, were sipping beer and talking quietly at the bar; behind it, the bartender was busily polishing glasses, and that was all. Brady nodded briefly to them without speaking and continued on to the table where the girl sat rummaging in her handbag, for the moment completely unaware that he was standing in front of her.

Hell, he thought, looking down at her, she's only a kid. More like a schoolgirl than a new graduate of the police college. Why did they have to send this one? Couldn't they have sent a brawny one, a tough one? Even then it would be bad enough, but this one was small, delicate, pretty. This one should be laughing and flirting and having fun, not sitting here in a dark corner of a bar waiting to be sent out into heaven knows what. Hell! He cleared his throat.

The sound startled her; and she looked up and saw him standing there watching her, saw the close-cropped black hair with just a shading of grey at the temples and the steady eyes and the firm lines of the lips and jaw and the tightness of the gabardine coat across the broad shoulders. Joe Brady, the tough cop, the Iron Lieutenant—only somehow not as cold and hard as his reputation had painted him, still in his middle thirties, much younger than she had imagined him.

"Miss Collins?" he said, keeping his hands in his pockets, not shifting his eyes from her. She nodded. He pulled up the chair beside her. "I'm Lieutenant Brady, Homicide."

"Yes, they said you'd meet me here."

"You've been briefed on this, you know what you're supposed to do?"

He's being tough now, she thought, he's not wasting any time with preliminaries. All right, if that's the way he wants it.

"I'm to report to the hospital with the four o'clock shift of nurses," she recited flatly, tonelessly, "and leave with them when they go off duty at midnight. I'm to catch the twelve-twenty Elmwood Road bus and ride to the end of the line. I'm to get off there and walk a half-mile to Mrs. Harvey's house. She has a spare room which she lets to nurses and I'm to stay there. I'm to report to the hospital again the next afternoon. I'm to do this every day until I'm officially relieved."

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Brady put his big hands flat on the table and leaned forward a little. "Anything else?"

"Yes," she said, fighting to keep her voice steady, to stifle any betraying hint of nervousness. "You're in charge of the case and I'm to report anything suspicious directly to you. If anyone tries to pick me up, I'm to let them—go along with them. I'm to obtain all the information from them I can." She paused and took a deep breath. "I'm to use the gun in my handbag if necessary."

And if you get the chance, Brady said to himself. If you get the chance.

The bartender appeared and took the order for two bottles of beer and brought them back and set them on the table. Brady filled the glasses and held his up. "Cheers," he said over the top of the glass, as though he meant it, and she smiled for the first time and they both drank.

Brady set his glass down carefully and watched the little train of bubbles rising in it. "You know why you're doing this?" he asked abruptly, keeping his eyes down.

"Why, yes," she said, puzzled. "Yes, I think I do."

She thinks she knows. Brady looked at her, saw the soft auburn hair framing the small oval face, the bridge of freckles across the pert nose, the red warmth of the lips, the tautness of the white uniform across her breasts.

The other one, the other nurse whose place she was taking, might have looked like that once; might once have been young and pretty and gay and alive. But not when he saw her. Not with her swollen tongue clenched between her teeth, not with the bluish sheen on her grotesquely puffed lips and skin, and the angry red marks of suffocating pressure still on her throat. Not with the soiled white uniform ripped away from her breasts and pulled high about her thighs, and her wide eyes still staring with sightless pain and horror at the open sky.

Brady saw it all in an instant and his voice was suddenly cutting, whiplike, lashing out at her, trying to sting her into a realisation of what she was doing before it was too late.

"You think you know why you're doing this," he said. "You think you know. Well, that's not enough. I want you to know exactly. I want you to know that you're taking the place of a nurse who was raped and strangled just six weeks ago. You're going to work where she did, and sleep where she did. You're going to take the same bus and get off at the same place and walk the same half-mile. And, if we're lucky, sooner or later the same man is going to try it again."

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He's trying to frighten me, she thought resentfully, not understanding. He thinks I'm too young, too new—afraid I'll panic, lose my nerve, somehow tip the killer off before they can get to him. He thinks Joe Brady is the only tough cop in the department. She set her lips. "I understand all of that perfectly, Lieutenant," she said calmly, precisely.

Brady went on as though he had not heard her. "We're going to give you all the protection we can, but that's not going to be much. We don't dare to use any extra men or cars, and take the chance of scaring him away. We want everything just the way it was then. It's more country than town out there and normally pretty quiet, so we've only had one patrol car assigned to the area. That's the way we're going to leave it. The Elmwood bus reaches the end of the line about twelve forty-five, and we're going to allow you fifteen minutes to walk to Mrs. Harvey's house. As soon as you get there, go up to your room, turn on the light and pull down the blind. The cop in the patrol car will be watching for it. If he sees it, he'll know that everything is all right. If he doesn't—"

He reached inside his coat, pulled out a packet of cigarettes and offered her one. She shook her head and he lit one for himself and watched the smoke curl around the dim light over the table.

"I'm trying to be frank," he said. "I want you to know just what your chances are, and I want you to know that they're not very good. We'll have ten cars waiting on the fringe of the area in case that light doesn't come on and the patrol car sends in an alarm, but there's always the chance he could slip by us. We'll catch him sooner or later, but it's a matter of time, a matter of whether we can get to you soon enough." He thought of the pigeon, the stained and broken decoy. "You understand?" he asked her, almost savagely, wanting to be sure.

"Yes, Lieutenant," she said sharply, "I told you before. I understand perfectly."

"All right," he said, and the harsh toughness was all at once gone from his voice, and there was only resignation and weariness left. "Stall him, give us as much time as you can, keep the gun where you can use it and don't wait too long." He drained his glass, started to get up, then stopped.

"I want you to know something else," he said. "I want you to know we wouldn't ask you or anyone else to do this if we had anything else to go on, but we haven't. Not a clue, not a tip, nothing. We checked every man with a sex record in the

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county. She didn't have any boyfriends, wasn't the kind of girl who would let herself be picked up. It rained that night, hard, and we couldn't even lift a tyre print. We haven't got a thing, but we've got to get him before he can do it again. Our only chance is to hold out a bait to him. It's not a pretty way to do it, not a way that I'm proud of, but it's the only way that's left."

He stood up suddenly without giving her time to reply, knowing that it was settled, that it was too late for explanations, that he was only making it worse for her. "Good luck," he said and held out his hand. She took it and her own was small and fragile in his. He held it for a moment, as though reluctant to let it go. "I don't think I even know your first name," he said.

"Janet," she told him.

"Good luck, Janet," he said, and then he was rapidly walking away from her, and the door opened and closed and he was gone.

After he had gone, she sat alone at the table and tried to finish her beer, but it was suddenly flat and tasteless. She looked at her watch. Three-thirty. She lit a cigarette and finished it, and then put on her coat and went out to the street and to the hospital nearby. She reported to the supervisor whose name she had been given and was shown to a small room that had been set aside for her. She spent the next eight hours there, reading the long-outdated magazines with which the room had been supplied, once or twice trying to nap but finding herself unable to relax, drinking endless cups of coffee from a percolator that the supervisor had given her, watching as the hands of the wall clock dragged slowly around.

At midnight she left with the other nurses and walked down the street to wait for the Elmwood Road bus. It was almost empty when she boarded it at precisely twelve-twenty, and by the time it reached the loop at the end of the line she was the only passenger.

She said goodnight to the driver and then she was alone on the edge of the road, watching the receding lights of the bus on its way back to the city. There was a street light, the last on Elmwood Road, and she glanced at her watch. Twelve forty-five. She looked up the road. There were no cars, no houses, no lights, just the road running off into the darkness. Just the road and the woods and the night sounds and the darkness and nothing more. Nothing more that she could be sure of.

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Nothing more for the next half-mile, the next fifteen minutes, the longest half-mile and the longest fifteen minutes in the world.

She began to walk, at first counting the steps and the minutes, then, realising that she was frightened, trying to tell herself that there was nothing to be afraid of, forcing herself to rehearse the details of what she would say, what she would do, where she would put the handbag with the gun. Twice cars passed her and each time she tensed, feeling alone and naked under the glare of their headlights, but each time they passed without slowing and the covering darkness folded back over her.

She had almost reached Mrs. Harvey's when she saw the blue car for the first time. It came round the bend behind her, coming more slowly than the others, pinning her under its lights, holding her there. She could see Mrs. Harvey's house only a hundred yards ahead and she wanted to scream, wanted to run, but she compelled herself to continue walking, holding her eyes straight ahead as the car crept up beside her, not looking until it was past and the car had begun to accelerate. She stopped then and tried to make out the licence plate, but the light beneath it had been burnt out or broken and she could see nothing but the twin red tail lights as the car sped off up the road.

She walked faster, almost ran the last few yards to the house. When she reached the safety of the door she stood there for a moment, just stood there, breathing hard, trembling, feeling limp and empty and exhausted, feeling as though the last few drops of strength and emotion had been wrung out of her.

Suddenly she remembered and looked at her watch. Two minutes to one. The patrol car, the lighted window, the blind. Hastily she fumbled in her bag for the key she had been given and found it and let herself in. She ran upstairs to the front bedroom and flicked on the light, then hurried to the front window and lowered the blind.

She looked at her watch again. One o'clock.

She undressed and went into the adjoining bathroom and stood under the shower, letting the warm spray massage the tension out of her tired body. Coming back into the bedroom, she looked at the drawn blind and it was pleasantly comforting to know that somewhere outside a patrol car had also seen it, that if she had not been there to draw it the alarm would have gone crackling out into the police radios and that within a matter of minutes patrol cars would have been converging from every direction.

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When they came, she knew that they would be in time. Brady had only been testing her, trying to frighten her. She got into the bed and felt the sheets cool and clean against her body. Brady would not let them be late. Brady, Brady, Brady. Within a matter of minutes she was asleep.

The next day was the same as that day had been and the next and the next and the next, and then a week had gone by and then two weeks. One day was like another, one night the same as the night before. Always the darkness, always the fight against the choking fear, always the sickening tension as the lights of a car approached, always the trembling relaxation as they passed.

And always the blue car. It was there every night, sometimes coming from one direction, sometimes from the other, never stopping but always there, always seeming to be stalking, watching, waiting. Once or twice she had seen the brake lights flash momentarily after it had passed her, as though the driver had suddenly decided to stop, but then he would again change his mind and the motor would roar and the car would be gone.

She had made no contact with Brady. On several different occasions she had considered reporting the activity of the blue car to him, then decided against it. There was nothing really tangible to report, nothing really suspicious, only a feeling, and she was afraid that he would think that she was becoming jumpy at nothing, losing her nerve. From time to time the patrol car would pass her on the road and she would feel a reassuring comfort from its brief presence, but then it would be gone and the fear would return to take its place.

It did not happen until Wednesday of the third week.

It was raining hard that night when the bus left her standing there alone in the road, a steady drenching downpour that plastered stray wisps of hair against her face, trickled wet and cold inside the collar of her cape, soaked the flat white shoes and cotton stockings that she wore, left her sodden and miserable before she had gone a hundred yards.

She had walked no farther than that, when the blue car came up from behind her abruptly, unexpectedly, as though it had been lying in wait near the bus loop. She felt herself held in its lights for what seemed to be an eternity, heard the faint hiss of its tyres as it crept up on her, remembered that Brady had said that it had rained that other night, on that other nurse. The familiar paralysing fear returned, but through it she found herself almost wishing that the blue car would stop tonight, get it over with, give her the chance to return to being a

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woman again, not just the dangling bait in the jaws of a giant rat trap.

And then suddenly the light of an approaching car was sweeping around the bend of the road ahead and the tyres of the blue car spun furiously against the wet macadam of the road and it was by her and gone. She stopped and stood in the road and watched the lights of the oncoming car and when she saw the distinctive signal flasher on the roof and the bold orange lettering *POLICE* on the door, she almost sobbed with the quick release of tension.

The patrol car drew abreast of her, slowed, then made a U-turn and came back and stopped beside her. The window rolled down and the face inside, faintly illuminated by the dash lights, was young and goodlooking and grinning beneath the jauntily-worn uniform cap.

He leaned across the seat towards her. "Pretty wet to be out walking around tonight," he said. "Better hop in and let me drive you home."

Brady must have sent him, she thought. He hadn't said so but perhaps he was playing the game strictly like she was. And anyway, they had said that if anyone offered her a ride she was to take it. Not anyone except a cop. Anyone.

"Come on," he said to her, coaxing, impatient.

She felt the rain soaking through across the shoulders of her cape and inside the car it was warm and dry and inviting. "All right," she said and got in the car and closed the door and rolled the window up.

She settled herself in the corner of the seat, loosening her wet cape, placing the handbag in her lap, and immediately felt pleasantly relaxed and grateful. She looked across at him and started to smile, intending to thank him for watching for the blind at the window, for the unspoken reassurance he had given her on the nights when he had passed her on the road. But when she looked at him she was all at once aware of something in his eyes as they travelled over her, something in his expression, something in his manner that made her unaccountably uneasy. She hesitated, said nothing.

He grinned and put the car in gear. "That's what I like about you nurses," he said. "Nothing bashful, no big argument when you're asked if you want to go for a ride." The car began to crawl along the road.

She stared at him. Nurses. That's what I like about you nurses, he'd said. Not policewomen. Nurses. Didn't he know? Was he still playing the game or didn't he know?

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The car had picked up speed and he was driving with one hand on the wheel, one hand loose on the seat between them, looking straight ahead. The car rounded the bend and she saw the lights of Mrs. Harvey's house ahead. "There," she said eagerly, pointing, "that's where I live."

The car did not slacken speed. Instead his hand moved across the seat and her muscles tightened as she felt it press against the thin cotton uniform, against the smooth warmth of her thigh, caressing, promising. "Come on," he said smiling, taunting, "you know you don't want to go home yet. Who are you trying to kid? You know you nurses like a good time."

She recoiled from him, trying to press herself back farther into the corner, realising then with dull horror who he was, understanding what was happening to her. "Please," she heard herself saying, "please let me out," and then they had passed the house and the road behind them was cold and empty and he was laughing at her, thinking that she was only being coy, not understanding the suffocating flood of terror that was welling up in her, numbing her mind and her body.

Suddenly he braked the car hard and swung it to the right, and the lights were on the bush-choked entrance to an unused woodland road; and then the branches were slapping against the car and then they were through and the car had stopped and the branches were a screen behind them.

She had her hand on the door handle when they stopped, tried to open it, tried to escape, but he was too quick for her and caught her and pulled her roughly to him. Before, when she had gone over it a thousand times in her mind, when she had told herself exactly what she would do, she had planned to go along with him at first, to tease, to stall as Brady had told her. But now there would be no alarm, no way for Brady and the others to know until it was too late, and so she fought silently, desperately, tried to bite, tried to scratch, but the weight of him pinned her arms, forced her body against the seat.

She reached for the handbag, but he saw the motion and knocked it from her hand, and she heard it clatter to the floor. And then his lips were cutting cruelly into hers and he was pressing her back and his hands were hot and searching on her body. She managed to pull an arm free and tried to reach his eye with her thumb, as she had been taught, but he grasped her wrist and wrenched it down.

"You hellion," he said breathlessly, savagely, and one hand clamped itself brutally on her throat, cutting off her breathing,

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and the other was tearing at her clothes and she tried to fight back, but her head was beginning to swim and coloured lights were flashing before her eyes and she felt the strength draining out of her, knew that she was losing consciousness. She felt herself slowly falling, sinking through a stifling purple cloud, and then in the far distance, in another world, she could hear him curse, hear a car door opening and slamming, hear the slap of running feet against the wet turf, the angry bark of a shot, the urgent wail of sirens, and then the fog was slowly breaking away and she was aware that she had been released from his pressing weight and that she was alone in the car.

She made herself open her eyes, slowly, and it was no longer dark. Everything was alive with light, and then she remembered and looked for him, and he was sagging head down against the open door of the car. He held his hand to his shoulder and his arm hung limply; he was no longer young and confident but old and beaten.

Then someone shoved him roughly aside, and Brady, the tough cop, was there, his broad shoulders filling the car door. "Janet," he said, seeing her not moving, seeing the white face, the torn clothes. "Janet, are you all right? Did he—?" His voice was taut and there was no toughness in his eyes, only softness and anxiety.

She looked at him. "No," she said, "you weren't too late. I'm all right," and now that it was all over, now that she had done what he had asked her to do, now that she could go back to being a woman again, she put her hands to her face and began to cry, deep racking sobs, holding nothing back, not caring that he was watching her.

He took off his gabardine coat and put it around her and when the sobs had subsided, he wiped her face off gently with his handkerchief and carried her to his car, the blue one, as though she were only a little girl.

They were almost back into the city before he spoke. "I'm sorry," he said then, "but it was the only way we could get him. He had to be the one, someone that the other girl trusted, someone that wasn't likely to be checked on."

She looked at him but did not answer.

"That's why we had to have a girl straight from the college, someone he wouldn't know," he went on. "I couldn't tell you because we were afraid that if you knew you might unconsciously do or say something that would tip him off, and we knew we wouldn't get a second chance. You had a good

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record at the college and we had to trust that you'd be bright enough not to give it away when he picked you up."

He doesn't have to explain, she thought, but he wants me to know, wants me to understand.

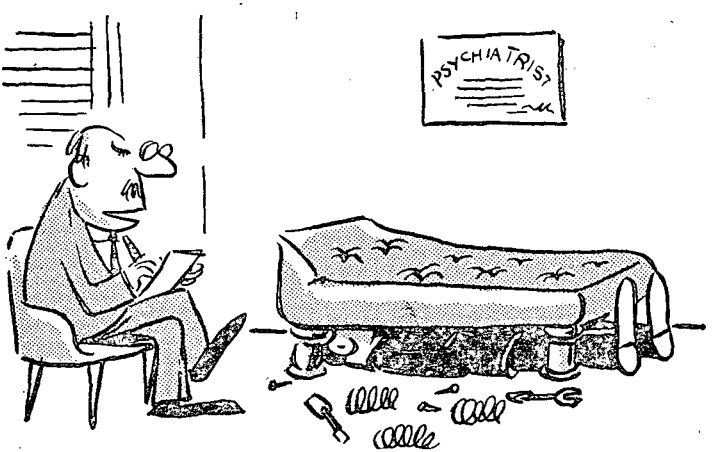
"I don't want you to think that we weren't playing fair with you," he said, "that we weren't backing you up." He indicated the two-way radio under the dash. "After I passed him on the road tonight, I parked in Mrs. Harvey's drive and sent out a coded alarm on another frequency. When he passed the house I kept behind him, slow, with my lights out. There was another patrol car blocking the road a mile ahead. We had him caught between us. It was only a question of getting to him in time."

"He wasn't watching for the window blind then?" she asked.

"No," he said briefly, "I was. He didn't know anything about it."

She thought of him out there every night, watching over her, protecting her, and it made her feel warm and good inside. "Thank you," she said.

"Don't thank me," he said quickly. "You're the one who did the job. You're the one who's in line for the citation." He looked at her then and grinned. "I thought it might look kind of nice hanging in the kitchen."



"When were you first compelled by this tremendous urge to tinker?"

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WELCOME TO WALES

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CROESO I CYMRU, said the first notice. *Welcome to Wales.* Friendly as you please.

The second one said, *Halt! Frontier Post.*

Chewed his cigar thoughtful, did the fat little man in the Mercedes with the central European registration. Puzzled, see. Hadn't expected a frontier post on the Welsh border. Just hadn't occurred to him, somehow.

He slowed down. Two uniformed figures appeared in his headlights. He stopped, wound down his window. A head was inserted. "Passport, please," said Cynlais Glyndwr.

Handed over his passport, the traveller did. Cynlais flicked through it. Then: "Where is your Form 27A?" he asked sternly.

Very pathetic, the traveller looked. "Pliz?" he said.

But Cynlais was looking even sterner. "Not trying to enter the Principality without a Form 27A, is it?" he demanded. He went back to his companion. With a sinking heart the motorist watched in his headlights the pursing of lips, the wagging of heads. Cynlais returned. "Better come inside," he said. "Only hope this isn't as serious as it looks at first sight."

Miserably, the foreign gentleman followed the two frontier guards into the parlour of a small, whitewashed house. Very cosy it was, too. A bright fire in a black-leaded grate, a kettle singing on the hob, china dogs beaming from the mantel. A bit different from frontier posts in Central Europe, the traveller would have thought if he hadn't been too worried to think. But Cynlais had pushed his peaked cap back on his forehead.

"Can't let you in without a 27A," he said firmly.

"But—but tomorrow I play ze Tchaikovsky First at the Llangrwl International Festival."

Unmoved, Cynlais looked. "Not our worry, boyo," he said.

But now his subordinate was plucking at his sleeve. "Could fill up a form here, the gentleman could," he pointed out. "Under penalty," he added.

The foreign gentleman had detected a ray of hope. "Pliz?" he asked, an ingratiating smile on his smooth, round face.

Cynlais explained. "Cost you three guineas—under the penalty clause," he added.

by E. L. Malpass

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"Guineas? Pounds, I know. Pence, I know. But—what are guineas?"

"Depends on the rate of exchange," said Cynlais. He studied a newspaper, stroked his chin. "H'm. Strong, guineas were yesterday. Two pounds, three shillings." He made rapid calculations. "Cost you six pounds, nine shillings."

Desperately the foreign gentleman pulled out his wallet, paid over the money.

Cynlais sat down at the table, a large sheet of paper in front of him. "Name?"

"Vladimir Potz."

Disgusted, Cynlais Glyndwr sounded. "Well, there is a name to go to bed with," he muttered. But he passed to the next question. "Birthplace of maternal grandmother?"

"Pliz?"

Cynlais flung down his pen. "Lack of co-operation will get you nowhere, Mr. Potz," he said angrily.

Almost in tears, Vladimir was. But the kindly Dewi, who had once already come to his rescue, said, "What he means is, where was Grannie from, Mr. Potz."

"Nijni Novgorod," said Mr. Potz, who couldn't see that it mattered.

"Well, there is outlandish," cried Cynlais, who had been born in a straightforward place like Rhos Llanerchrugog himself, wasn't much of a hand with a pen, and couldn't see why foreigners had to go out of their way to make life difficult.

However, eventually the 27A was completed. Vladimir signed it, and imagined he was free to go, the poor fool. He moved towards the door.

"Anything to declare?" barked Cynlais.

Vladimir stopped short. But already Cynlais was outside with the boot open. "Any cigars, musical scores, mineral waters—?" He had pulled aside a travelling-rug and revealed a crate of Vichy Water. "What is all this, then? Smuggling pop into the Principality now, is it?"

In vain did Mr. Potz clutch his stomach, roll his eyes in agony, suggesting pantomimically that the only thing to save him from abdominal anguish was Vichy Water. His remedy cost him dear—two guineas duty, with the guinea soaring to forty-five shillings even as they talked.

But at last he got away . . .

Cynlais rubbed his hands. Then, with the air of a man well satisfied with his day's work, he picked up the *Frontier Post* notice and carried it into the house. "Can't expect any

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more tonight, Dewi," he said. But at that moment a telephone rang. Cynlais answered it, smiled, carried the notice outside again. The two frontier guards put their peaked caps back on their heads, and prepared for action. The call of duty came at strange hours.

It never found them unprepared.

Whenever the Come to Llangrwl Association announced a new venture, the simple people of Dinas asked themselves one simple question: *Is there anything in it for us?* And if the answer was *no*, they took prompt and efficient action to turn it into *yes*.

So that, before the announcement of a Llangrwl International Festival was an hour old, the neighbouring town of Dinas was like a coiled spring . . . dark little men padding furtive into the private bar of the Red Dragon . . . Morgan the Obsequies arriving in one of the funeral cars, parking it respectable outside the Bank, walking the last hundred yards—wouldn't be nice leaving it outside a pub, now, would it? And, at last, the red face, handlebar moustache and loud tweeds of Cynlais Glyndwr, Chairman of the Dinas Amenities Committee.

With practised ease he pushed open the swing doors of the Red Dragon. He entered the private bar. The door was shut. The Committee was in secret session.

Without more ado Cynlais Glyndwr handed out copies of the *Llangrwl Echo*. Then he spread his hands on the table. "An International Festival," he cried disgustedly. "Designed to coincide with Dinas Bowls Week."

Murmured angrily, did the hastily summoned Committee. They were, they hoped, men of the world. Not easily shocked by human greed and iniquity. But this action of Llangrwl's had plumbed new depths. Not only would it overshadow the glamour of Dinas Bowls Week. It would also, at first sight anyway, prove a very difficult venture to cash in on.

Cynlais waited. Then he gazed up at the ceiling, rather like the Reverend Edwards before plunging into prayer, and said almost to himself, "Unaccustomed to the British way of life, many visitors to an International Festival must be."

There was another pause. He went on, "Be a pity—one might almost say a crime—not to take advantage of this influx of eager innocence."

Devious-minded to a man, his hearers were. Even so, they were plodding along miles behind their cunning Chairman.

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"How would you suggest we gather this fruitful harvest, Glyndwr?" asked Evans the Fish.

Cynlais took off his glasses, held them to the light, removed a smear, put them back on his nose. "What is the first thing you do on entering a foreign country?" he asked.

Silence. Then: "Get off the boat?" suggested Dewi Roberts, who had once been across from Cardiff to Weston-super-Mare.

"Go through the Customs," said Glyndwr.

Nodded sagely, did Evans the Fish. Cottoning on, see. "Might feel themselves cheated, some of our foreign visitors, if there was no Customs."

"Might write Wales off as a Second Class Power," said Dewi.

It was left to Morgan the Obsequies to strike a jarring note. Never one to look on the bright side, that old undertaker. Now he said, "Never get the Government to agree to it, Mr. Glyndwr."

"Wasn't thinking of the Government," said Glyndwr. "A purely private venture, this will be." He turned to the rest of the meeting. "Has any member got a broadminded relative living on a main road near the border?"

"Got an auntie, six feet this side of Shropshire," cried the eager Dewi.

"Be willing to turn her house into a frontier post, maybe?" asked Cynlais.

"Yes, indeed. Taken against all foreigners, my auntie has. Once got overcharged sixpence in a shop in Chester," Dewi explained.

Ideal, it sounded. But there was that old Morgan crabbing it again. "Can't see the English taking kindly to the idea," he said. "Rather pay Customs to the Popish French than to their Welsh cousins, if I know them."

Cynlais said patiently, "Not going to interfere with the English. Just have a look-out man with a field telephone half a mile up the road. And whenever he sees a car with a foreign registration he alerts the reception committee. The rest will depend on the initiative of Our Men on the Border." He allowed himself a fleeting smile. "And in that," he added with every justification, "I have the utmost confidence."

The Cadillac slid to an expensive halt. "Wilbur, wake up," cried a woman's excited voice. "We're entering another State." She peered at the notices. "Kimroo," she said,

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puzzled. "You ever heard tell of Kimroo State, Wilbur?"

"They don't have States, Myrtle," said Wilbur sleepily. "The guidebook says—".

But he found himself gazing into the unwelcome eyes of Cynlais Glyndwr. "Anything to declare?" snapped Cynlais.

"Such as like what? And say, what is this one horse State, anyway?"

"The Principality of Wales," cried Cynlais. Like the rattle of musket shot, his consonants were. "Have you any cigars, spirits, motor cars—?"

Wilbur shook his head. Cynlais' eyes narrowed. "Not trying to deny you have a motor car, is it?" Oh, cold as ice his voice was.

"Sure we got an automobile. But you don't pay duty on your own goddam Cadillac."

"You do in Wales," said Cynlais.

"But I shall be taking it out again in a week." He looked at two pairs of stony eyes. His heart sank. "Shan't I?" he asked.

Pursed his lips, did Cynlais. "Depends on Clause B," he said.

"And what in hell's Clause B?"

"Better come inside," said Cynlais. Grimly he led the two Americans into the frontier post.

"Well, what do you know!" cried Myrtle. "China dargs. You ever see a Customs shed with China dargs before, Wilbur?"

But Cynlais was saying, inexorably, "Now then. Any silks, furs, cameras, perfume?"

Wilbur said coolly, "Didn't know Wales had a Customs barrier. Thought it was part of England."

Well, there was a thing to say to a full-blooded Welshman. Cut to the quick, that Cynlais. "Granted Independence last week; in all the papers it was."

Dewi's eyes were shining. "Went wild with joy, the people did. Free beer at The Miners' Arms, a gala performance of *Elijah* in the Town Hall . . ."

Cut his minion short, did Cynlais. Came back to business, sudden. "And without a certificate of duty paid, under Clause B, your motor will be impounded if you try to leave the country."

"You ever see a Customs shed with an illuminated text, *The Lord Seeth All*?" asked Myrtle. "Isn't that just quaint, Wilbur?"

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But Wilbur was more interested in the telephone. "I demand to ring up the American Consul," he said.

Didn't tell him the nearest thing to an American Consul he would get on *that* instrument was a shivering Morgan the Obsequies half a mile up the road. Just said, "Conversant with the Welsh tongue, is it?"

"Didn't know there was a Welsh tongue," said Wilbur.

"Only understand Welsh, our telephone operators, since the glorious Day of Liberation," said Cynlais.

Wilbur had had enough. "How much?" he asked wearily.

"Fifty pounds."

"Fifty pounds? But that's—a hundred and fifty dollars."

"Three hundred," corrected Cynlais. "These," he explained patiently, "are *Welsh* pounds . . ."

"Boy, was that Customs shed quaint. China dargs, texts, folksy furniture. Cost Wilbur three hundred dollars to go through, but I reckon it was worth every dime."

The Festival Club was a babel of noise. But it couldn't drown Myrtle. Her voice soared above all others like a line of pylons sweeping across a valley. And now a tall gentleman came to rest beside her and murmured, in one of those quaint, Welsh voices, "Where *was* this Customs shed, madam?"

Very distinguished, the gentleman looked, with his silky, silvery beard. A bit like Uncle Sam, only in a dark suit. Myrtle was flattered. "Why, it was on your State border. Imagine, china dargs!"

Griffiths Mortimer, Chairman of the Llangrwl Urban District Council, for it was none other than he, smiled his secret smile, bowed and passed on . . . "A beautiful rendering of the Tchaikovsky, Mr. Potz!" he cried.

But sunk in gloom, Mr. Potz was. "Like bloddy 'ell," he muttered scornfully, staring into his glass.

Mortimer's eyebrows shot up. "You were not satisfied with the performance?"

The eminent musician spat. He turned upon Mr. Mortimer a glance charged with Central European venom. "'Ow can I play good when my nerves go jingle-jangle from the treatment I receive at your Customs?"

Griffiths Mortimer said quietly, "There are no Customs in Wales, Mr. Potz." He went on his way, thoughtful.

But now an excited American gentleman was approaching him. "Mister, what happens to a guy who loses his Clause B Certificate?"

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At a loss, Griffiths Mortimer was. But didn't show it, mind. He said, "Maybe, as Chairman of the Council, I could issue you with a new one." What the devil, he wondered, was a Clause B Certificate. "There would be a fee, of course," he added with his charming, though frosty, smile.

"Okay, okay," said Wilbur. It wouldn't surprise him to find there was a fee for crossing the road in this country. "That's better than losing your goddam automobile."

"And *were* you," Griffiths asked cautiously, "in danger of losing your goddam automobile?"

"That's what the man said."

"What man?"

"That Customs guy."

"I see," said Mortimer. He perched on a bar stool. "Tell me," he said, "just where was this Customs Post?"

PC Protheroe propped his bicycle against the notice that said *Croeso I Cymru*. Then he took off his helmet and mopped his forehead. Pedalled a long way, he had. And what was at the end of it? A pretty, whitewashed cottage and *Welcome to Wales*. Frontier Posts, indeed. Bogus Excise-men! Been watching too much telly, that Griffiths Mortimer had.

Still, since he was here— He knocked at the cottage door. And if it's opened by a uniformed Customs Officer, he thought, you can call me James Bond.

But it wasn't. It was opened by a beaming, apple-cheeked old lady who said, "Why, come in, Constable. Those boys been after my pears again, is it?"

"No, ma'am," said Protheroe. "There are reports that this house has been used as an illegal Frontier Post."

Looked at him in astonishment, the old lady did. Then she gave herself up to mirth. "Ho, ho," she chortled. "Ty Gwyn a frontier post!" Her gesture took in the fire, the homely pottery, *The Lord Seeth All*.

But Protheroe hadn't finished. "Have you," he asked, trying to look like that old Chief Inspector Barlow, "have you any relatives in Dinas?"

A pair of blue, innocent eyes met his. "No, indeed. Never heard of the place. Got a step-niece in Aberystwyth, though, if that is any help."

"Be going then," Protheroe said, putting on his trouser-clips again.

But Auntie had gone to a cupboard. "Cannot let you

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venture forth without a glass of parsnip wine," she said. Oh, a sweet old lady that one, and no mistake . . .

"Well?" asked Griffiths Mortimer. "And what did you get?"

"A glass of parsnip wine, sir," said PC Protheroe. "But the funny thing was, that room was just like the American lady said—bright fire, china dogs—"

"And did you," asked Griffiths Mortimer, "ever see a Welsh cottage parlour that hadn't those things?"

"No, sir."

But Mortimer was stroking his beard, very thoughtful. "Nevertheless, Protheroe, we will not give up. We will match cunning with cunning. Something," he added with pardonable pride, "something at which we have not always been unsuccessful in the past."

It has been claimed that, with the possible exception of the Scottish variety, Welsh rain is a good twenty-five per cent wetter than the rain of any other country—as Morgan the Obsequies, perched on his bare hillside, was discovering to his cost. For two pins he'd pack up, before he became one of his own clients.

But, no! A car was approaching, the rain like chain mail in its headlights, the tyres whining on the wet road, the wipers clacking like hysterical metronomes. The car had a foreign registration. Morgan picked up the telephone, poured a gill of cold water into his ear, and gave his message.

Cynlais, his feet up in front of a blazing fire, swore. It *would* be a night like this when he was alone on duty. No Dewi to do the outside jobs. He pulled on his oilskins, grabbed the Frontier Post notice, and hurried out into the downpour just in time to flag down the car.

But he wasn't staying out in this lot. "Come inside," he bellowed, ran for the shelter of the door, and waited.

Someone was getting out of the car. A tall dark-skinned gentleman in white robes who advanced through the rain with unhurried dignity. Pausing in the porch, he bowed courteously and said, "Sheikh Haroun Al Raschid. At your service."

"Evening," said Cynlais, feeling that so courteous a greeting called for something more polite than, Have You Anything to Declare?

"May you have a hundred sons," said the Sheikh, who was still bowing.

"Ta," said Cynlais, without much enthusiasm, for he was

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not unduly philoprogenitive, and thought two was a nice number himself.

They went inside. And at last Cynlais got round to it. "Anything to declare?" he asked.

Sheikh Haroun was thoughtfully fingering a string of beads. "Is there," he inquired, "a duty on wives?"

"Not on the first," said Cynlais, cautiously. There was something here he didn't understand. This was the first time he'd ever met an Oriental Potentate with a Welsh accent. Still, he remembered, this was the first time he'd ever met an Oriental Potentate, anyway. "Not on the first," he repeated with more confidence. "Additional ones are charged for on an ascending scale."

"I," said the Potentate, "have brought four with me. Travelling light," he explained.

"Have to check on that," said Cynlais, heartened by a sudden vision of dusky beauties in baggy trousers and yashmaks. He went out to the car. But he might as well have stayed in the dry. This lot were dressed for the weather. Perched up in the estate car, they might have been a pewfull from any Welsh chapel.

He came back into the bright warmth. "Anything else?" he demanded.

The stranger tossed a small leather pouch on to the table. "Diamonds," he said. From the folds of his voluminous garments he pulled what looked like a quarter of tea. "Indian hemp," he said agreeably.

Turned pale, Cynlais did. Getting out of his depth. But the Sheikh was still producing imports like a conjurer rabbits. "A hundred reefers. A pint of perfume. A bottle of arrack. *Fanny Hill*. Now. What are you going to charge for that lot, boyo?"

Licked his lips anxious, did Cynlais. Didn't want to miss anything . . . At the same time . . . like a fish looking at a big fat worm, and not quite sure that there wasn't a hook embedded in that succulent flesh. He swallowed.

"That will be—exactly one hundred pounds," he said.

The Sheikh wrote out a cheque, handed it with an oriental flourish to Cynlais. Cynlais hadn't wanted a cheque, anyway. Apt to look askance, banks were, at private citizens trying to cash cheques payable to H.M. Customs and Excise. Besides, the damn thing was probably made out in Arabic, anyway. He looked at it anxiously. And his heart sank even farther. "Why have you signed it, *Lyndon B. Johnson*?" he asked.

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The Sheikh smiled his frosty smile, and went on fingering his beads. But now there was a slight sound coming from the doorway.

Cynlais spun round. Four hatchet-faced women regarded him grimly.

"Permit me," said the Sheihk, "to introduce the lady members of the Llangrwl Urban District Council." He stroked his silky beard. "Not wives, but witnesses, to paraphrase Saint Augustine."

Terrible then, the silence was.

"What are you going to do?" whispered Cynlais.

"Only send for the police," said Griffiths Mortimer. "Unless," he added as an afterthought, "you would care to pay over all dues and duties received to the Llangrwl Festival Fund, a worthy cause."

Very lonely, Cynlais felt. Here he was, fighting for Dinas; and Dinas, in the hour of need, had left him to fight alone. Bitterly he wrenched open a drawer in the Welsh dresser. Bitterly he took out a metal cash-box, gave it to Griffiths. Griffiths peered inside, smiled, tucked it under the draperies. He turned for the door, but paused to touch Cynlais' shoulder lightly. "Terrible weather for the Bowls Week, bach," he said sympathetically.

They went. And no sooner had they gone than Cynlais noticed they had left their imports lying on the table. Well, he might as well look, though he wasn't very hopeful.

Just as well, too. He shook out the diamonds—pebbles. He smelt at the Indian hemp—tea. He examined the reefers—good, honest Virgina. He opened *Fanny Hill*—expurgated...

The rain dripped forlornly from the eaves. Well, he supposed he'd better call in Morgan the Obsequies before he developed webbed feet and started to quack. But at that moment the telephone rang. "Quick, boy. Slap a fifty per cent duty on musical instruments. Got the entire New York Philharmonic descending on you in a body. Saw their name on the back of the bus." Warming to his job at last, that Morgan was, now it was too late.

But Cynlais Glyndwr did not even bother to reply. He replaced the receiver. Outside he heard the bus approaching, slowing down, puzzled at the notice, then gathering speed again.

He did not lift a finger. The New York Philharmonic swept on, unchecked, into the Principality.

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Girl on the Bank

WORKING down in the cut, Callaghan had a curious notion that he was being watched. The cut ran straight as a rule across the fields, a scar on the countryside to take the gas main for the new grid. Along the ditch, you could sight the Euclids and the bulldozers, etched against the sky. The rest of the gang was along there . . .

Here, it was different. Someone was watching him—had been for some time. He stopped forking at the heavy clay to turn and look back.

She was standing against the blue of the sky, a golf club idly in her hand. A pool of black shadow lay at her feet. She didn't shift her eyes when he looked up at her—young, with a wisp of blonde hair blown across her cheek. Her eyes had an innocent interest in something seen for the first time—a man with his torso glossed with sweat. The brutish mass of bone and sinew with the muscles rippling under a sunburnt skin. Young shoulders, wide as a gate, and hands like the knee of a bull.

Now, in the hot press of the afternoon sun, two were watching, in the place of one. It was like something in a film, caught in a moment of stillness and held. But for the boy in the ditch this was suddenly something else again. This was a stir of something new, something he hadn't known before.

A ramming thrust like a telegraph pole crashed into Callaghan's ribs. The foreman ganger, O'Hara, only moved his forearm a few inches, but years of man-handling had made a

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paralyser of that blow. You had to be watching pretty closely to see it.

"Taking a little time out, I see!" The foreman, coming up quietly, had noticed the girl, and he spoke now with his eyes on her, not on the boy. "Knocked off, eh? Lost your tongue, too?"

Callaghan turned back to his job. He was fair enough to realise that it was this great ox of a man's job to keep the work going. He shouldn't have eased up to look at a girl . . .

"You wouldn't want me to take a real poke at you?" O'Hara asked, and this brought the hot blood to Callaghan's face. He did not know it, but it was the challenge that roused him. That and this sort of talk in front of the girl.

"All right," he said. "I'm back on the job now. Satisfied?"

O'Hara was built like a barrel and his face looked as if it had weathered a hundred brawls. His cheekbones were scarred: his knuckles hard as cement. He had been through all sorts of fights, fair and foul, and so far nothing had come up to beat the daylights out of him. He had the arrogance of the undefeated.

The girl moved now. She walked a distance up the bank, back on to the fairway out of the rough. She swung with the iron, practising the follow-through in her swing. She wasn't watching Callaghan at work. She had other things to do.

The foreman growled again and moved back along the bed of the cut. His shadow followed, like a black sack dragged behind him.

Callaghan, as he worked at the clay, could see Rafferty's head stuck out of the steel box of his digger, watching his cutters at work on the turf. He wore a little hat like Robin Hood's and the pipe in his mouth stuck out like a dart in a board. Samways, in the bulldozer, wore a bowler. Fletcher, stripped to the waist, was standing on the bank making signals to Harrison. O'Hara was now sitting on a wheelbarrow, lost to the world, but watching the work all the same.

Callaghan had worked along one side, clearing up after the digger, when he got that queer notion again. He looked back, and she was there, same as before, standing quite still and watching him. This time, her eyes seemed to waken to contact and a shadow of a smile softened her face in the sunlight.

He rested an arm on the handle of his fork. So she'd come back? Come back to watch him work in the ditch? Somehow it didn't add up, but he felt the stir of it in him, tingling the flesh of his shoulders. It seemed to Callaghan

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that this girl didn't mind him watching her. It was as if there were something between them. Something that held them...

That short-range ram took him once more in the ribs. "So you're a great guy with the dames, eh?"

He didn't like this sort of talk with the girl there close on the bank to hear. And why was O'Hara so interested?

"In case you're thinking of dating up that piece," the foreman said loud, "you can forget it, boy. I've just remembered something. I've remembered you're on the bunkhouse shift tonight."

Callaghan turned on him, flushed. "My go was last night," he said. "I cleaned the place out last night, and you know it."

"Fresh, eh?"

"My time off is my own," Callaghan said boldly. He had never answered this man back before. It was not the sort of thing you tried among the rest of them, if you were just seventeen.

"Not while I'm boss of this outfit. If I say you stay in camp and clean the bunkhouse that's just precisely what you do, punk—d'you hear?"

"It's not my shift," Callaghan said. He could tell the girl was listening and the last thing he wanted was that anyone should think now that he couldn't stick up for himself.

"It is, if I say so."

Callaghan jabbed his fork into the ground then, hand free, he turned slowly. "Not with me," the boy said.

He watched the back of O'Hara, who was eyeing the girl on the bank. She was still, but her hair moved again on her cheek. He could see the whiteness of her teeth.

"You heard what I said, punk. Back to your work, or I'll be taking my belt to you."

Callaghan felt his fist bunching. "You'll—what?"

"You heard."

"Put a hand on me," Callaghan promised, "and I'll knock your block off for you."

The foreman turned now to stare. The shock had brought him up short—*this*, from a punk of seventeen! He had a lesson coming to him all right!

Like a snake striking he swung at Callaghan, but the boy was keyed up. His reactions were equally quick and he stepped under the swing, surer-footed by reason of his youth. Before he himself had time to realise the significance of it, he had lashed out and caught the bigger man a stinging crack on the right cheekbone. The punch had iron-hard muscle behind it

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and nearly two hundred pounds of weight. Besides, the co-ordination was clean as a whistle—no years of beer and over-feeding to slur it.

Before it had started, O'Hara, the old-timer, knew he had a fight on his hands—who would have thought it with this kid? He filled his lungs and took a keen balance on his toes. The first jab with the left was groping. The second went deeper and the boy blocked it neatly. Then the older man let loose the swing that generally ended any bar room brawl before it had much chance to begin.

Callaghan rolled with it and without shifting his feet threw a sharp left into O'Hara's face again.

Far from finishing the fight, that swing had only opened it up, and this bastard had got through to him again. The older man's face darkened with rage. So this kid was born quick, was he? So he had one hell of a punch! All right—let him use himself up, and then we'd see!

O'Hara gave ground. He let the boy swing. Callaghan didn't know enough to hold his punches. All he knew was that he was going to beat the daylights out of this great ox, and he leapt in to end the job. O'Hara took it on the forearm and the shoulder. It rocked the older man but he could stand it where he chose to take it . . .

The next thing O'Hara knew, he was flying through the air. Blinding lights flashed before his eyes, but he was conscious and in control. The moment his body hit the ground, he rolled. He was taking no chances that he'd get the boot heel in his face. But the boy stood over him while he rose, hands on his hips, chest rising and falling with his rapid breathing.

The foreman backed off, shaking his head. He blew his nose through his fingers and squared off to start again.

"Who'd have said the lad had it in him?" Rafferty shouted.

"Flat on his ass," Fletcher grinned.

The rage in O'Hara was murderous now. *He* down in a fight! Rushed by a son of bitch like this boy! He went in now to damage the other, never mind how open he left himself. He was going to smash this kid—and how!

Time and again the older man felt his head jerk back to this boy's jabs. He let it go. He was getting through to the boy's body, and O'Hara knew that sooner or later his condition would collapse under that sort of punishment. Nothing on two feet could stand it . . . O'Hara's chin was smeared with blood. The slime dropped over his throat to his chest. He

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found it hard to see out of his left eye. The singing in his head was persistent and level, and he knew the strength in his legs was wasting away. His heart thumped. But he could take it. He had taken punishment before. Now, he would wait his chance and end it. He hoped the chance would come soon . . .

It came. Callaghan slipped on the clay, skating on one foot, and the foreman stepped in. He hit the boy with a sharp uppercut, then smashed in with his stiff right, putting everything he had behind the bare-knuckle blow. He watched the boy crumple on the clay. O'Hara's chest was heaving as he laboured for breath and as it rose and fell, red froth sucked in and out of his split lips. His sight was misted and his heart thumped wildly.

This was the end. No-one could survive a mauling like this . . . But now Callaghan was pushing up, not finished yet. This was youth. You could hammer it. You could smash it. But it came back—like hitting a motor tyre with your fist.

As the boy came in, O'Hara breathed, "Oh, God, he can't wait!" He tried to roll with the wild swings that were thrown at him. He had to duck and interpose a shoulder. He had to back away because he couldn't see too well now. And still this boy came at him. When you hit him it didn't stop him. He absorbed the punishment. It didn't take.

O'Hara felt his front teeth loose against his probing tongue. No-one had loosened a tooth of his before. One eye was now tight shut, blood from it trickling down his nose. He heard a shout nearby, "Stop him, somebody! Stop him!"

That meant the boy. Stop the fight? With O'Hara at the losing end? For a while he held on in a clinch, fighting for the air that would fill his lungs. When he pushed away, Callaghan steadied and stood waiting. The older man made no move.

It was then the boy made his second mistake. He moved in to end it, and O'Hara hit him. He hit the other like a punching bag—low and *through*. Callaghan doubled up and sagged to the ground.

God, this had been a scare! For a while he'd thought he might end his career as a bruiser by going down to the kid. But not now! Not now! He might not see clearly and his breathing was bad. He might be a little weak on his pins, *but he'd come through*—hadn't he?

Then the boy began once more to move.

O'Hara watched like a man bemused as the boy shook his

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head. He was up now on his feet, covering up, *moving in.*

Yes, hitting this boy was like hitting a tyre. However hard you hit, it made no impression. Something brought him back . . . O'Hara knew what it was. Youth eliminating the old bulls. Youth on the up.

He could feel the drive of the other's punches now, taking him this way and that. Smacked this side, slammed the other. Dead now on his feet. In return, hitting out at nothing. Buckled here, straightened up there.

"Get a pole or summat 'atween 'em!" Rafferty yelled.

Someone threw a rope as the fighters staggered round, and it caught on Callaghan's foot. The older man swayed towards him. Callaghan hit him on the chin. This time O'Hara toppled. He sank as he folded, and lay still, his limbs spread at unnatural angles.

"'Tis killed he is!" moaned Rafferty. "Easy now, m'bucko! You don't know your strength!"

The gang began to pull on the rope and now they had a twist round his torso. Someone pressed a pole into his back. He let them caper. The fight was over, wasn't it?

"Aisy! Aisy, boy!"

Callaghan began to unravel the rope, amused at the respect they had for him now. Rafferty was on his knees, slapping the foreman's cheek. "Stone dead as a crow!" he moaned. "Killed he is, and all!"

"Be your age," Harrison said, and the foreman himself began to moan.

Callaghan, free of his rope, moved away. The business had little to do with him, he thought. He wiped some of the gore from his face and it was then he saw the girl . . . She hadn't moved an inch. She still held the golf club and she still watched him, only now it was as if she had never seen a fight before.

A hand touched his shoulder and when he turned, Rafferty jumped a foot back. "You going to let us move him?"

"He won't be laying hands on me again," Callaghan said. "Take him to the bunkhouse. Take him to hell for all I care."

"Fine, Captain. Fine it is!"

He filled his chest and let the breath go slowly. He was feeling fine. But all that girl could do was stand there and *look.*

For a while he tried to sort it all out, but it was beyond him. So he spat on his hands and picked up his fork. He was only seventeen. He didn't know what came next.

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If he took her hand he would destroy her

THE PRISONER

by EVAN HUNTER

THEY were telling the same tired jokes in the squad-room when Randolph came in with his prisoner.

Outside the grilled windows, October lay like a copper coin, and the sun struck only glancing blows at the pavement. The season had changed, but the jokes had not, and the climate inside the squad-room was one of stale cigarette smoke and male perspiration. For a tired moment Randolph had the feeling that the room was suspended in time, unchanging, unmoving, and that he would see the same faces and hear the same jokes until he was an old, old man.

He had led the girl up the precinct steps, past the hanging green globes, past the desk in the entrance corridor, nodding perfunctorily at the desk sergeant. He had walked beneath the white sign with its black-lettered DETECTIVE DIVISION and its pointing hand, and then had climbed the steps to the second floor of the building, never once looking back at the girl, knowing that in her terror and uncertainty she was following him. When he reached the slatted rail divider which separated the corridor from the detective squad-room, he heard Burroughs telling his old joke, and perhaps it was the joke which caused him to turn harshly to the girl.

"Sit down," he said. "On that bench!"

The girl winced visibly at his voice. She was a thin girl wearing a straight skirt and a faded green cardigan. Her hair was a bleached blonde, the roots growing in brown. She had wide blue eyes, and they served as the focal point of an otherwise uninteresting face. She had slashed lipstick across her mouth in a wide, garish red smear. She flinched when Randolph spoke, and then she backed away from him and went to sit on the bench in the corridor, opposite the men's room.

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Randolph glanced at her briefly, the way he would look at a bulletin board notice about the Policemen's Ball. Then he pushed through the rail divider and walked directly to Burroughs' desk.

"Any calls?" he asked.

"Oh hi, Frank," Burroughs said. "No calls. You're interrupting a joke."

"I'm sure it's hilarious."

"Well, I think it's pretty funny," Burroughs said defensively.

"I thought it was pretty funny too," Randolph said, "for the first hundred times."

He stood over Burroughs' desk, a tall man with close-cropped brown hair and lustreless brown eyes. His nose had been broken once in a street fight, and together with the hard, unyielding line of his mouth, it gave his face an over-all look of meanness. He knew he was intimidating Burroughs, but he didn't much give a damn. He almost wished that Burroughs would really take offence and come out of the chair fighting. There was nothing he'd have liked better than to knock Burroughs on his behind.

"You don't like the jokes, you don't have to listen," Burroughs said, but his voice lacked conviction.

"Thank you, I won't."

From a typewriter at the next desk Dave Fields looked up. Fields was a big cop with shrewd blue eyes and a friendly smile. The smile belied the fact that he could be the toughest cop in the precinct when he wanted to.

"What's eating you, Frank?" he asked, smiling.

"Nothing. What's eating you?"

Fields continued smiling. "You looking for a fight?" he asked.

Randolph studied him. He had seen Fields in action, and he was not particularly anxious to provoke him. He wanted to smile back and say something like, "Ah, the hell with it. I'm just down in the dumps"—anything to let Fields know he had no real quarrel with him. But something else inside him took over, something that had not been part of him long ago.

He held Fields' eyes with his own. "Any time you're ready for one," he said, and there was no smile on his mouth.

"He's got the crud," Fields said. "Every month or so the bulls in this precinct get the crud. It's from dealing with criminal types."

He recognised Fields' manœuvre and was grateful for it. Fields was smoothing it over. Fields didn't want trouble, and

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so he was joking his way out of it now, handling it as it should have been handled. But whereas he realised Fields was being the bigger of the two men, he was still immensely satisfied that he had not backed down. Yet his satisfaction rankled.

"I'll give you some advice," Fields said. "You want some advice, Frank? Free?"

"Go ahead," Randolph said.

"Don't let it get you. The trouble with being a cop in a precinct like this one is that you begin to imagine everybody in the world is crooked. That just ain't so."

"No, huh?"

"Believe me, Frank, it ain't."

"Thanks," Randolph said. "I've been a cop in this precinct for eight years now. I don't need advice on how to be a cop in this precinct."

"I'm not giving you that kind of advice. I'm telling you how to be a *man* when you leave this precinct."

For a moment Randolph was silent. Then he said, "I haven't had any complaints."

"Frank," Fields said softly, "your best friends won't tell you."

"Then they're not my best . . ."

"All right, get in there!" a voice in the corridor shouted.

Randolph turned. He saw Boglio first, and then he saw the man with Boglio. The man was small and thin with a narrow moustache. He had brown eyes and lank brown hair, and he wet his moustache nervously with his tongue.

"Over there!" Boglio shouted. "Against the wall!"

"What've you got, Rudy?" Randolph asked.

"I got a punk," Boglio said. He turned to the man and bellowed, "You hear me? Get the hell over against that wall!"

"What'd he do?" Fields asked.

Boglio didn't answer. He shoved out at the man, slamming him against the wall alongside the filing-cabinets. "What's your name?" he shouted.

"Arthur," the man said.

"Arthur *what*?"

"Arthur Semmers."

"You drunk, Semmers?"

"No."

"Are you high?"

"What?"

"*Are you on junk?*"

"What's—I don't understand what you mean."

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"Narcotics. Answer me, Semmers."

"Narcotics? Me? No, I ain't never touched it, I swear."

"I'm gonna ask you some questions, Semmers," Boglio said. "You want to get this, Frank?"

"I've got a prisoner outside," Randolph said.

"The little girl on the bench?" Boglio asked. His eyes locked with Randolph's for a moment. "That can wait. This is business."

"Okay," Randolph said. He took a pad from his back pocket and sat in a straightbacked chair near where Semmers stood crouched against the wall.

"Name's Arthur Semmers," Boglio said. "You got that, Frank?"

"Spell it," Randolph said.

"S-E-M-M-E-R-S," Semmers said.

"How old are you, Semmers?" Boglio asked.

"Thirty-one."

"Born in this country?"

"Sure. Hey, what do you take me for, a greenhorn? Sure was born right here."

"Where do you live?"

"Eighteen-twelve South Fourth.'

"You getting this, Frank?"

"I'm getting it," Randolph said.

"All right, Semmers, tell me about it."

"What do you want to know?"

"I want to know why you cut up that kid."

"I didn't cut up nobody."

"Semmers, let's get something straight. You're in a squad-room now, you dig me? You ain't out in the street where we play the game by your rules. This is *my* ball park, Semmers. You don't play the game my way, and you're gonna wind up with the bat rammed down your throat."

"I still didn't cut up nobody."

"Okay, Semmers," Boglio said. "Let's start it this way. Were you on Ashley Avenue, or weren't you?"

"Sure I was. There's a law against being on Ashley Avenue?"

"Were you in an alleyway near four sixty-seven Ashley?"

"Yeah."

"Semmers, there was a sixteen-year-old kid in that alleyway, too. He was stabbed four times, and we already took him to the hospital, and that kid's liable to die. You know what homicide is, Semmers?"

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"That's when somebody gets killed."

"You know what homicide cops are like?"

"No. What?"

"You'd be lying on the floor almost dead by now if you was up at Homicide. Just thank God you're here, Semmers, and don't try my patience."

"I never seen no kid in the alley. I never cut up nobody."

Without warning, Boglio drew back his fist and smashed it into Semmers' face. Semmers lurched back against the wall, bounced off it like a ball, and then clasped his shattered lip with his hand.

"Why'd you—?"

"Shut up!" Boglio yelled.

From where he sat, Randolph could see the blood spurting from Semmers' mouth. Dispassionately, he sat and watched.

"Tell me about the kid," Boglio said.

"There ain't nothing to—"

Again, Boglio hit him, harder this time.

"Tell me about the kid," he repeated.

"I—"

The fist lashed out again. Randolph watched.

"You going to need me any more?" he asked Boglio.

"No," Boglio said, drawing back his fist.

From across the room, Fields said, "For Christ's sake, lay off, Rudy. You want to kill the poor bastard?"

"I don't like punks," Boglio said. He turned again to the bloody figure against the wall.

Randolph rose, ripped the pages of notes from the black book and put them on Boglio's desk. He was going through the gate in the railing when Fields stopped him.

"How does it feel?" Fields asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Being an accomplice."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Randolph said.

"Don't you?"

"No."

"You beginning to think the way Boglio does? About punks I mean?"

"My thoughts are my business, Dave," Randolph said. "Keep out of them."

"Boglio's thoughts are his business too."

"He's questioning a punk who knifed somebody. What the hell do you want him to do?"

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"He's questioning a human being who maybe *did* and maybe *didn't* knife somebody."

"What's the matter, Dave? You in love with this precinct?"

"I think it stinks," Fields said. "I think it's a big, stinking prison."

"All right. So do I!"

"But for Christ's sake, Frank, learn who the prisoners are! Don't become—"

"I can take care of myself," Randolph said.

Fields sighed. "What are your plans for the little girl outside?"

"She's trash," Randolph said.

"So?"

"So what do you want? Go back to the report you were typing, Dave; I'll handle my own prisoners."

"Sure," Fields said, and turned and walked to his desk.

Randolph watched his retreating back. Casually, he lit a cigarette and then walked out into the corridor. The girl looked up as he approached. Her eyes looked very blue in the dimness of the corridor. Very blue and very frightened.

"What's your name?" Randolph asked.

"Betty," the girl said.

"You're in trouble, Betty," Randolph said flatly.

"I—I know."

"How old are you Betty?"

"Twenty-four."

"You look younger."

The girl hesitated. "That's—that's because I'm so skinny," she said.

"You're not that skinny," Randolph said harshly. "Don't play the poor little slum kid with me."

"I wasn't playing anything," Betty said. "I *am* skinny, I know I am. It's nothing to be ashamed of."

Her voice was very soft, the voice of a young girl, a frightened young girl. He looked at her, and he told himself, *She's a tramp,* and his mind clicked shut like a trap.

"Lots of girls are skinny," Betty said. "I know lots of girls who—"

"Let's lay off the skinny routine," Randolph said dryly. "We already made that point." He paused. "You're twenty-four, huh?"

"Yes." She nodded and a quiet smile formed on her painted mouth. "How old are you?"

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"I'm thirty-two," Randolph said before he could catch himself, and then he dropped his cigarette angrily to the floor and stepped on it. "You mind if I ask the questions?"

"I was only curious. You seem—never mind."

"What do I seem?"

"Nothing."

"All right, let's get down to business. How long have you been a hooker?"

The girl looked at him blankly. "What?"

"Don't you hear good?"

"Yes, but what does hooker mean?"

Randolph sighed heavily. "Honey," he said, "the sooner we drop the wide-eyed innocence, the better off we'll be."

"But I don't—"

"A hooker is a prostitute," Randolph said, his voice rising. "Now come off it!"

"Oh," the girl said.

"Oh," Randolph repeated sarcastically. "Now how long?"

"This—this was my first time."

"Sure."

"Really," she said eagerly. "I'd—I'd never gone out looking for—men before. This was my first time."

"And you picked me, huh?" Randolph asked unbelievingly. "Well, honey, you picked the wrong man for your first one."

"I didn't know you were a cop."

"Now you know."

"Yes. Now I know."

"And you also know you're in pretty big trouble."

"Yes," the girl said.

"Good," Randolph answered, grinning.

Actually the girl wasn't in as much trouble as she imagined herself to be—and Randolph knew it. She had indeed stopped him on the street and asked, "Want some fun, mister?" and Randolph had immediately put the collar on her. But in the city for which Randolph worked it would have been next to impossible to make a prostitution charge stick on such flimsy evidence. Randolph conceivably had a "discond" case, but disorderly conduct was a dime-a-dozen misdemeanour and was hardly worth bothering with in a precinct where felonies ran wild. So Randolph knew all this, and he had known it when he collared the girl, and he sat now with a grin on his face and watched her, pleased by her troubled expression, pleased with the way her hands fluttered aimlessly in her lap.

"You can get out of it," he said softly.

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"How?" the girl asked eagerly.

His voice dropped to a whisper. "If you know the right cop," he said.

The girl stared at him blankly for a moment. "I haven't any money," she said at last. "I—I wouldn't have done this if I had money."

"There are other ways," Randolph said.

"Oh." She stared at him and then nodded slightly. "I see."

"Well?"

"Yes," she said, nodding again. "All right."

"Let's go," Randolph said.

He walked briskly to the railing and leaned on it. To no one in particular he said, "I'll be back in an hour or so." Before he turned he noticed the curiously sour expression on Dave Fields' face. Briskly he walked to the girl. "Come on," he said.

They went down the steps to the ground floor. At the desk a patrolman was booking a seventeen-year-old kid who was bleeding from a large cut behind his ear. The blood had trailed down his neck and stained his tee-shirt a bright red. The girl gasped when she saw the boy, and then turned quickly away, heading for the steps.

"If he's the one they're booking," Randolph said, "I hate to think what the other guy must look like."

The girl didn't answer. She began walking quickly, and Randolph fell in beside her. "Where to?" he asked.

"My place," she said. An undisguised coldness had crept into her voice.

"Don't take this so big," he said. "It's part of a working day."

"I didn't know that," the girl said.

"Well, now you do."

They walked in silence. Around them the concrete fingers of the city poked at the October sky. The fingers were black with the soot of decades, grimy fingers covered with waste, and not with the honest dirt of labour. The streets crawled with humanity: old men and young men, kids playing stickball, kids chalking up the sidewalks, women with shopping bags, the honest citizens of the precinct—and the others. In the ten minutes it took them to walk from the precinct to the girl's apartment, Randolph saw fourteen junkies in the streets. Some of those junkies would be mugging before the day ended. Some would be shoplifting and committing burglaries. All would be blind by nightfall.

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He saw the bright green-and-yellow silk jackets of a teenage gang known as "The Marauders," and he knew that the appearance of a blue-and-gold jacket in their territory would bring a street bop and broken ribs and bloody heads.

He saw the hookers and the pimps and the sneak thieves and the muggers and the ex-cons and the drunks and the fences and the peddlers of hot goods—he saw them all, and they surrounded him with a feeling of filth, a feeling he wanted desperately to search out and crush because somewhere in the filth he had lost himself.

Somewhere, long ago, a young patrolman had cracked a liquor-store hold-up, and the patrolman had been promoted to detective third-grade, and the patrolman's name was Frank Randolph. And somewhere back there the patrolman Frank Randolph had ceased to exist, and the detective Frank Randolph had inhabited the shell of his body. The eyes had turned hard, and the fists had turned quick, and the step had turned cautious, because there was danger in these streets, and the danger awakened every animal instinct within a man, reduced him to a beast stalking blood in the narrow, dark passages of the jungle.

There was hatred within the muscular body of Frank Randolph, a hatred bred of dealing with tigers, a hatred which excluded the timid antelopes who also lived in the forest.

And so he walked with a young, thin girl, walked towards her apartment where he would use his shield as a wedge to enter her bed and her body. He had begun using his shield a long time ago. He was as much an addict to his shield as the junkies in the streets were addicts to the white god.

The tenement stood in a row of sombre-faced buildings; buildings which solemnly mourned the loss of their latter-day splendour. The fire escapes fronting each building were hung with the trappings of life: blankets, potted plants, pillows, empty beer-cans, ashtrays, guitars. Autumn had come late this year, lingering over the slow death of a hot summer, and the cliff-dwellers had taken to the slum terraces, the iron-barred rectangles that gave them a piece of sky and a breath of air.

"This is it," she said.

He followed her up the stoop. A woman was sitting on the steps knitting. She glanced up at him as he passed, sensing immediately, with the instinct of self-preservation, that he was a cop. He could almost feel her shrinking away from him, and his own instinct asked the question, What's she done to be afraid of?

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Garbage cans were stacked in the hallway. The refuse had been collected earlier that day, but the cans were never washed, and they filled the air with the stink of waste. There was a naked light-bulb hanging in the entrance foyer, but it would not be turned on until dusk.

The girl climbed the steps ahead of him. He walked behind her; her legs were remarkably good for a girl so thin. They climbed steadily. There were voices behind the doors. He heard the voices in a medley of sound, and he reflected on the doors he had broken, a quick flat-footed kick against the lock to spring it, since he'd been a detective. Rarely had he knocked on a door. Rarely had he given the occupant a chance to unlatch it. The kick was quicker, and it precluded the possibility of a door being opened to reveal a hostile gun inside.

" It's on the third floor," the girl said.

" All right," he answered, and he kept following her, watching her legs.

" Be careful, there's a broken bottle."

He skirted the shards of brown glass, smelling the whisky fumes as he passed the alcohol-soaked wood. The girl stopped at a door at the end of the hall. She unlocked it and waited for him to enter. When they were both inside, she put the police lock in place, leaning the heavy, unbending steel bar against the door, hooking it securely into the steel plate embedded in the floor, so that it formed a formidable triangle against which entrance was impossible.

The kitchen was small but clean. A round table sat in the centre of the room, and a bowl was on the table. A single apple rested in the bowl. The girl went to the window and lifted the blind. Light, but not sunlight, entered the room. It was a pale light which bounced from the brick walls of the tenement not four feet away, leaping the airshaft between the buildings. The girl turned.

" I—I don't know what to do," she said. " I've never done this before."

" No? " he said, and there was a trace of sarcasm in his voice.

" No. Could—could we talk a little? "

" What about? "

" I don't know. Anything." The room grew silent. Patiently, Randolph waited.

" I'm—I'm sorry the place isn't nicer," the girl said.

" It'll do."

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" I meant—" She shrugged.

" What? "

" I don't know. A girl likes to think—" She stopped, shrugging again. " Would you like a beer or something? I think we have some cold in the frigidaire."

" No, thanks," Randolph said. He grinned. " We're not allowed to drink on duty."

The girl missed his humour. She nodded and then sat opposite him at the table. Silence crowded the room again.

" Have you been a cop long? " the girl asked.

" Eight years."

" It must be terrible, I mean, being a cop in this neighbourhood."

For a moment Randolph was surprised. He looked at the girl curiously and said, " What do you mean? "

" All the—all the dirt here," she said.

" It . . ." He paused, studying her. " You get used to it."

" I'll never get used to it," she said.

She seemed about to cry. For a panicky instant he wanted to bolt from the room. He sat, undecided, at the table, and then he heard himself saying, " This isn't so bad. This is a nice apartment."

" You don't really mean that," she said.

" No," he answered honestly, " I don't."

The girl seemed to want to tell him about the apartment. Words were perched on the edge of her tongue, torrents of words, it seemed, but when she spoke she only said, " I haven't got my own room."

" That's all right," he said. " We can use . . ." And then he stopped his tongue because he sensed the girl had not wanted to say that at all, and the sudden insight surprised him and frightened him a little.

" Where do you live? " she asked.

" In a hotel," he said.

" That must be nice."

He wanted to say, " No, it's very lonely." Instead, he said, " Yeah, it's all right."

" I've never been to a hotel. Do people wait on you? "

" This is an apartment hotel. It's a little different."

" Oh."

She sat at the table, and he watched her, and suddenly she was trembling.

" What's the matter? " he asked.

" I'm scared," she said.

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"Why?"

"Because of—of what I almost did. What I almost became."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm glad you arrested me," she said. "I'm glad I got caught the first time. I don't want to be—"

She began crying. Randolph watched her, and he felt inordinately big, sitting across from her, awkwardly immense.

"Look," he said. "What do you want to bawl for?"

"I—I can't help it."

"Well, cut it out!" he said harshly.

"I'm sorry." She turned and took a dishtowel from the sink, daubed at her eyes with it. "I'm sorry. Let's—let's do it."

"Is this really your first time?" he asked suspiciously.

"Yes."

"What made you . . . Well . . . I don't understand."

"I got tired," she said. "I got so damned tired. I don't want to fight any more."

"Fight what?"

"Fight getting dirty. I'm tired of fighting." She sighed wearily and held out her hand. "Come," she said.

She stood stock-still, her hand extended, her shoulders back.

"Come," she repeated.

There was a strength in the rigidity of her body and the erectness of her head. In the narrow stillness of her thin body there was a strength, and he recognised the strength because he had once possessed it.

He rose, puzzled, and he reached out for her hand, and he knew that if he took her hand, if he allowed this girl to lead him into the other room, he would destroy her as surely as he had once destroyed himself. He knew this, and somehow it was very important to him that she be saved, that somewhere in the prison of the precinct, somewhere in this giant, dim, dank prison there should be someone who was not a prisoner. And he knew with sudden painful clarity why there were potted plants on the barred fire-escapes of the tenements.

He pulled back his hand.

"Keep it," he said harshly, swiftly.

"What?"

"Keep it," he said, and he knew she misunderstood what he was asking her to keep, but he did not explain. He turned and walked from the room, and down the steps past the stacked garbage cans in the hallway and then out into the street.

He walked briskly in the afternoon sunshine. He saw the

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pushers and the pimps and the prostitutes and the junkies and the fences and the drunks.

And when he got back to the precinct, he nodded perfunctorily at the desk sergeant and then climbed the stairs to the Detective Division.

Dave Fields met him just inside the slatted rail divider. Their eyes met, locked.

"How'd you make out?" Fields asked.

Unwaveringly, unhesitatingly, Randolph replied, "Fine. The best I've ever had." Fields turned away when he added, "Any coffee brewing in the clerical office?"

SPORTING CHANCE

As a race we love to play the game—
but see if you can get 10 out of 10!

1. Name the only two clubs in the entire four divisions of the English football league whose names begin with the letter E.
2. In snooker, how many of the balls used in the game are red?
3. What make of car (the name consists of only four letters) won the 1962 Monte Carlo Rally?
4. Which location in which country is regarded by water skiing enthusiasts the whole world over as the Mecca of this sport?
5. What famous centuries-old race is rowed on the Thames from London Bridge to Chelsea each year around the end of July?
6. Who invented the cannonball service in tennis?
7. Whom did Jack Johnson beat to become the first negro heavyweight boxing champion of the world?
8. If a batsman is unfortunate enough to be out for two "ducks" in two innings during the one match, what phrase is used to describe his cricketing plight?
9. In May, 1954, Roger Bannister became the first athlete to run the mile in under four minutes. What was Bannister's official time for the mile?
10. With which popular sports do you associate the following cups?

    (a) Canada Cup.
    (b) Thomas Cup.
    (c) Swaythling Cup.

Feeling confident? Turn to page 167 for the answers...

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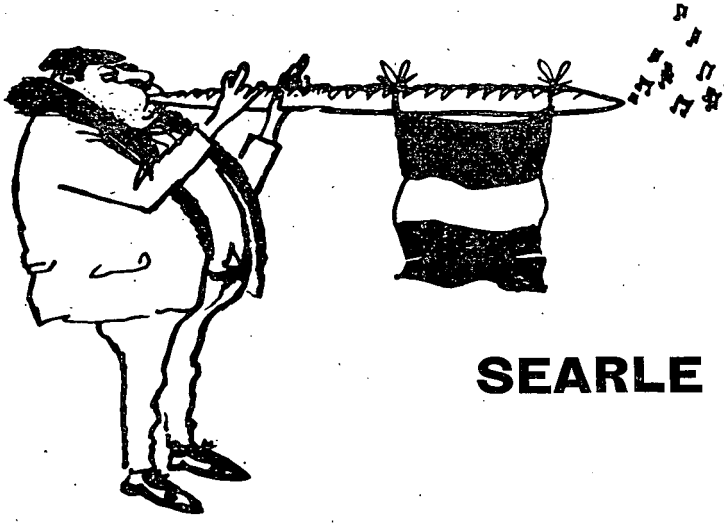
Ronald Searle

When it's springtime — April, to be exact—and the chestnuts are in blossom, where else would you want to be but Paris? And if you could also happen on a witty, zestful guide who would draw your attention to the capital's essential features, our guess is your fun would be just about complete — who better than Ronald Searle? Cast aside all that Anglo-Saxon reserve and come take a stroll down the boulevards to see some Gallic life — as only Searle can show it!



SEARLE

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IN PARIS

Ronald Searle, born in Cambridge, 1920, had his first cartoons accepted when he was just 15. He's won fame since not only as a cartoonist but as a film/set designer and as creator of those bloomered horrors, the Belles of St. Trinian's—whose 4th film is just coming up. ▶▶▶

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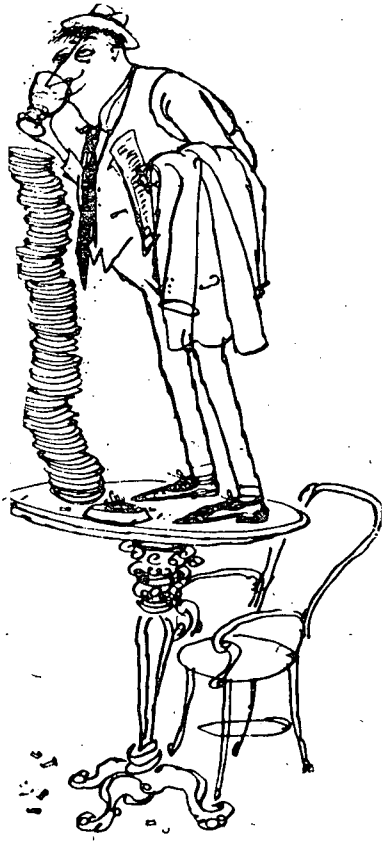
Whether it's a glass of wine (and thou!) . . .

. . . or fifty, pleasure sings a heady song.



Searle in Paris

(contd.)

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Suddenly I found his expression diabolical . . .

Speaking of heroism

by ROMAIN GARY

SEVERAL years ago, when the French Institute in Haiti invited me to lecture on a subject of my own choosing, I didn't hesitate a moment: I decided on heroism. It's a theme that is familiar to me; I've spent long hours in my library studying it. Danger, courage, the spirit of sacrifice had, so to speak, no secrets left for me, and when I reached Port-au-Prince I was truly prepared to give the best of myself.

The Port-au-Prince public is one of the most perceptive and cultivated in the world. When I stepped on to the dais, soberly dressed, the ribbon of the *palmes académiques* in my button-hole, I was determined to rise to the occasion. There were, moreover, many attractive women in the audience, and I was not at all sorry to have been on a brief diet just previous to the lecture, during which I had managed to lose about thirty pounds.

I mentioned Saint-Exupéry, Malraux and Richard Hillary, and I managed quite skilfully in fact, without ever speaking of my own heroic experiences as a passenger on the great airlines, to slip in a few rather suggestive, though discreet *we*'s. The acoustics were excellent, the lighting showed my face from a flattering three-quarters view and, as I explained in a steady voice how death deliberately faced could give life its whole meaning, I ascertained that our embassy was well represented and tried to count the goodlooking women in the audience.

But suddenly I felt a heavy gaze on my face. It came from the first row, where a gentleman was sitting, blacker than the darkness of the hall. His attentive eyes never left me for a moment. I was quite annoyed by this insistence, particularly since I thought I detected something mocking in his expression. Yet I refused to be deterred, and concluded my lecture

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by explaining how the modern hero, confronting mortal danger, rediscovers at that supreme moment all the permanent, forgotten values, and how such an experience can fruitfully enrich one's life and work.

When I left the dais, the gentleman who had listened with such attention was the first to congratulate me.

"Doctor Bonbon," he introduced himself. "Splendid lecture. It is obvious you have a deep personal knowledge of the subject."

I remained modestly silent.

"By the way," he said, "I've been asked by several of your readers to make your stay in Haiti as pleasant as possible. I thought it might amuse you to go shark hunting off the Iroquois reef. Strong emotions doubtless are not disagreeable to you . . ."

The notion, indeed, was not at all disagreeable to me. It is important for a literary man to have his legend. To have hunted sharks in the Caribbean might have a certain interest for future biographers. I gladly accepted the invitation tendered by the friendly doctor. I saw myself like Hemingway, solidly strapped into my seat, struggling to the last with a gigantic fish suspended from my rod . . . I was to repeat my lecture at Cap-Haitien the next afternoon, and we agreed to start out at six in the morning.

At the appointed hour we met at the doctor's yacht, and set out on a sea which no fear of clichés can keep me from describing as emerald. The doctor was smoking a short pipe and watching me calmly.

"By the way," he said, "it might be a good idea to try out your *Cousteau*."

"My . . . what?"

"You should try out your snorkel," the doctor explained. "You'll be going down to the reef about five yards from the edge, and the oxygen bottles give you at least twenty minutes on your own. I'll show you how to work the underwater gun. It's quite simple."

He looked at me, suddenly very attentive.

"What's the matter?" he asked gently. "Is something wrong?"

I had to sit down. For a few moments more I tried to struggle against the evidence. But the sailors were getting the machinery ready, and the doctor, holding the gun, obligingly gave me the necessary technical explanations. There was no doubt about it—it was not a question of fishing with a rod.

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These people intended to make me go down into the shark-infested Caribbean and leave me alone with a gun in my hand among those hideous brutes! I opened my mouth to protest...

"You know," the doctor said, with revolting unction, "I can't tell you how much we all enjoyed your moving lecture on courage. All Haiti will be talking about it, I'll make sure of that..."

We looked at each other. I said nothing and faced the music. There are moments in life when you have to safeguard your livelihood. The only thing I had in this world was my reputation as a lecturer, and if I had to get myself devoured by sharks to keep it, I was ready.

They tried on the mask; it fitted me perfectly. I stared glumly at the green waves.

To end this way, stupidly, without even getting on a best-seller list...

"Now put on the lead belt. It will get you down there instantly..."

Suddenly I found his expression, for all his apparent friendliness, quite diabolical. I let myself be harnessed.

"These boys will go down with you," he added, pointing to the four black giants who were fussing around me.

Ah! I thought with relief. Bodyguards. I felt better.

"They're the beaters," the doctor explained. "They'll go ahead of you on each side to drive the sharks towards you. Then all you have to do is shoot."

I didn't even have the courage to object. Besides, everything was suddenly all the same to me. They put huge flippers on my feet, then the belt, the mask, stuck the gun in my hands and graciously helped me over the side.

I went *Ploof!*

The next few minutes I spent revolving like a top, trying to protect myself on all sides at once. I achieved, I suspect, a rather astonishing rotation rate. But I soon got tired and had to collapse on the sand in a green fog. A few moments later I made out a coral reef to my right and began to proceed crabwise in that direction, with the intention of protecting myself from the rear at least. At the same moment, I saw a long, slender fish come out of a hole in the rock and freeze a few inches from my nose.

I screamed, but it wasn't a shark.

It was a barracuda.

I had never seen a barracuda in my life, but this one I could

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recognise. There are some signs that never lie, and I had them all. I can't quite remember the seconds that followed; all I can be sure of is that, contrary to what I had said in my lecture, at the moment of mortal danger the hero does not discover the permanent values of life. That is definitely not what he does: that is all I can say. When I opened my eyes, the barracuda had gone. I was alone.

I made an effort to return to the surface, and I was about to make it when I saw a black form of almost monstrous proportions heading towards me, above my head. I gasped, struggled convulsively, grabbed my gun, closed my eyes and squeezed the trigger.

The gun was torn away from me with such force that my arms almost followed it.

In two seconds, I was at the surface, making frantic gestures and trying somehow to keep my legs out of water. Luckily, the boat was immediately to my left, and veered towards me with exasperating slowness, while I tried to bring my knees up against my chin. It's better to lose a buttock or two than a leg. The boat came closer, and with an agility surprising in a man my age I was almost immediately on the deck.

"Where's your gun?"

I caught my breath. Then I explained to the doctor what had happened. I had hit a shark, and the beast, pulling on the cable, had torn the weapon from my hands. The black swimmers were climbing back into the boat now. One of them was holding my gun. He gave the doctor some explanation in Creole. The doctor looked at me gaily.

"Apparently," he said, "your harpoon ended up in the hull of the boat."

The cynical character was obviously trying to suggest that in my hysteria I had mistaken the boat passing over my head for a shark.

Yes, I thought, well, you can just try to prove it.

"I clearly saw a shark pass between my head and the boat," I declared. "I missed it, such things happen. I hope I do better next time."

That evening, at Cap-Haitien, I calmly explained to the director of our Institute that I had hunted sharks off the Iroquois that very morning.

"The Iroquois?" he said. "But there have never been sharks off the Iroquois. They don't cross the reefs."

When I stepped on to the dais, to my astonishment—we were

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an hour's plane trip from Port-au-Prince—Doctor Bonbon was sitting in the first row.

He must have chartered a plane to hear my lecture on heroism again.

We looked at each other. But if this diabolical character thought he was going to disturb and distract me, he didn't know me at all. There's one quality no one can deny me, and that's moral courage. He could stare at me with all the irony he liked, I was determined to raise myself once again to the level of my subject.

"*Mesdames et Messieurs,*" I began, "when, in his solitude, the modern hero finds himself facing moral danger, the first thing he discovers . . ."

Doctor Bonbon was looking at me with a certain admiration.

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"What happened to that horse?"

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DOUBLE BASS LOVE

from Prague, an Argosy first

by Jan Werich

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IT was a very large and famous orchestra. There were three harps, six kettle-drums, innumerable violins and violas, horns of many kinds—there were even two bass clarinets, and many double bass.

They were all lying on the platform or leaning against chairs. There was not a player to be seen. They had been rehearsing all morning and had gone out for a break. A double bass propped up near the edge of the platform began to slip sideways and would certainly have fallen, if it had not come up against another double bass standing next to it.

"I beg your pardon," said the bass that had almost fallen down, speaking in a deep voice.

"Quite all right," answered the bass that had remained upright, also in a deep voice though a tiny fraction of a tone higher and more sonorous.

"It's difficult for a fellow to keep his balance unless he's propped really straight," said the first bass, speaking in the masculine gender. "Age will tell..." and he heaved such a sigh that the strings vibrated.

"You've no cause to complain of old age..." replied the bass with the higher voice.

"How old would you say I was, ma'am?"

"Not more than a hundred, if that."

"A long way off the mark. I was made in Milan in the year 1799."

"You don't say? You don't look it. So you're an Italian?"

"The master-craftsman who made me was a German. Germans make the best double bass. Schildkraut the elder."

"You are quite an aristocrat! Whatever brought you here?"

"I couldn't really say. I was lying in an attic somewhere for ages, then my case came before the law courts, and the man who won took me off in an open carriage. It was raining and my tables were quite ruined. It took them a long time to put me right, I can tell you. But I can't complain, now. From time to time my top notes don't sound very well, but that's all."

"Ah, the top notes, that's where I'm at my best! But I must admit that I haven't got the timbre I'd like to have in the lower notes; I'm well aware of that, and it does worry me."

"There's no need to worry about that—it's easy enough to put right."

"You mean I should dig my toe in harder and lean farther back?"

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"That's an old wives' tale! We're standing next to each other, aren't we? When we play low notes I'll help you out, a bit of extra vibrato effect, and you can do the same for me in the high notes."

The two instruments had a good laugh. It sounded as though a bumble bee had got in . . .

The break was over and musicians thronged back and took their places. The two double bass hastily promised each other to put their mutual aid pact into action that very day, during rehearsal, and here, advancing, were the two gentlemen who played them.

"Just look at that, Lou, the way those instruments are propped against each other, you'd say they were embracing."

"They're probably in love," said Lou, and completely failed to observe that his double bass was blushing.

In came the conductor; rapped his request for silence, and said, "Lepke Buchhalter, opus 88, we'll take it from the letter G, gentlemen."

They went on rehearsing until late afternoon. At first the two double bass helped each other out hesitantly, until they began to feel more sure of themselves, and each of them looked forward to the high notes and the low notes.

On their way home Lou said to the man who played next to him, "Didn't our instruments sound good today!"

The other replied with a laugh, "We do our bit, don't we? S'long, there's my bus," and he ran to catch it.

Next morning, when the time for the break came round again, Lou said to his pal, "Prop yours up against mine, then they won't fall," and they went off to get a snack.

"Did you sleep well?" the masculine double bass started off.

"Oh, not at all," replied the other with a sigh, "I was looking forward to the rehearsal so much. What about you?"

"I was looking forward to today, too."

"Only to the rehearsal?"

"Only to seeing you again. What about you?"

"I feel just the same about it."

"Catch those two!" the last musician but one shouted to the very last to go out. "They're falling down!" He only just managed to catch them. I'd better put them on the floor, he thought to himself and did so.

It was quiet in the hall. The bustle of everyday life in the street outside was faint and faraway.

"I have been in love with you for a very long time," said the first double bass in his deep, deep voice.

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"I always found you attractive, but from the day I heard you in the double bass solo at the beginning of Slavoslav Pantata's Cantata I have been in love with you, too."

"I was singing for you, my love."

"I felt it was so, my love."

"I could hop, skip and jump for joy," said the gentleman bass.

It was only a short break, for the first performance was hanging over their heads. The musicians were all over the place again, and Lou stood there laughing at the two instruments on the floor. "Just look at that—like lovers!"

"Under the hedge in spring," the other added.

"Let's hope not! I say, d'you think you could play her if she were in the family way?"

"Quiet, please!" the conductor shouted. "George Bauer, Symphony in C sharp minor, the end of the Largo beginning from the letter E. And let it go, right from the start, gentlemen, please, there's nothing to be afraid of—plenty of neo-pathos in it, not a dry eye in the audience!" He raised his baton and the famous orchestra thundered forth.

The double bass felt as though they were in heaven. It sounded as though from that very letter E the great Bauer had written a confession of love for the double bass. Deep notes, high notes and deep notes, a harmony of two souls, the vibrations of love, the frequencies of passion; oh, what can a chilly triangle know about that; a kettle-drum made of ass's skin, or a hoarse cymbal?

The great moment of the first performance was almost upon them.

The two instruments burnt with love.

"What a beautiful bridge you have!" the one sighed all of a sudden.

"Yours is even more beautiful," replied his lady, and from then on they were on the most intimate terms.

At last the great evening arrived.

The two double bass decided it would be their evening. They would help each other as never before.

They kept their word. Unable to embrace as we human beings do, they wound their notes in and out of each other's. He helped her and she helped him, and then they felt like being alone and soared off on their own. No longer were they two double bass; they were a song of love, a duet, unison and counterpoint of desire!

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Lou and his pal stared at their music and fingered their strings according to what they saw there, but that was not what they heard. Nor was that what the conductor heard; with his shirt-front limp from perspiration he stared straight at the two of them, and you could have lit a cigar at the glare in his eyes.

Lou and his pal shrugged their shoulders and looked round as if to imply that perhaps the sound was coming from somewhere else.

During the interval the conductor yelled at them, "What the hell are you two playing?"

"We're playing what's written in the music," they replied.

"Don't tell me that! It's sabotage! You'll hear more about this!"

And they did. First of all in the second half of the programme, when the double bass were selfish enough to enjoy the height of their passion in almost every bar. And then when the reviewers all agreed that the interpretation of Slavoslav Pantata's Cantata was faulty and the execution badly rehearsed and insufficiently studied. And finally they heard more about it in the conductor's office, a special finale for Lou and his pal.

By this time the conductor's feelings had calmed down a bit. His language was restrained and he was articulate.

"All right, we won't report the sabotage angle. But what in heaven's name do you think you were doing? You were drunk? Shut up! I'm only asking. You weren't? All right, then, how do you explain it?"

"We can play it through for you. We know it off by heart."

"Two double bass up here, right away," the conductor yelled into the phone.

In a few moments they brought in two instruments—double bass, common ordinary instruments, instruments that were not in love, just what happened to be nearest to hand.

"Cantata. Off we go." And the conductor began conducting.

Lou and his pal played. They played it through perfectly, without a single slip, right to the end.

"You both play very well indeed," remarked the conductor, who was a just man. "What can the explanation be?"

They sat round the table and discussed it. The conductor brought a bottle of white wine out of a cupboard. Then they sent the porter for two more bottles.

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Whereupon they came to the decision to call a press conference at which the whole affair would be explained away by the statement that the acoustics in the hall were not suitable and that the orchestra would be rearranged.

The press conference was attended by the sports reporters. The only critic to appear was the one who had given them a good write-up because he had been unable to go to the concert and had written his notice beforehand. The conference passed off in an atmosphere of friendliness on both sides, the whole business was explained and the critics were invited to the next performance. They all came except the one who had already missed one performance and written his notice beforehand.

The orchestra proudly took their places for the next performance; every seat was sold out. The conductor got his round of applause when he came on, and off they went.

At first the double bass part sounded all right. Well, it wasn't really all right, although the lay ear might have passed it; but at any rate it wasn't too bad, until they came to the Cantata and the choir came out in full blast . . .

Perhaps it was the word of the poet that moved the double bass to seek an outlet for their love. From that moment, they sang their own private melody. The conductor was sweating; loss of body liquid made him hoarse, so that fortunately nobody heard him hiss in the middle of it all, "I'll kill you, Lou, and your pal too!"

Lou did not hear him, but he heard his double bass. He saw his pal throw down his bow and depart, so he got up and went off too, dragging his instrument behind him.

This time there were no reviews. The musicians' journal printed an article on whether it was correct or incorrect to run symphony orchestras at the national level. The Municipal Commission for Musical Ensembles called a preliminary meeting with the Regional Management of the Stringed Instrument Industry to which all conductors were invited.

Lou and his pal were given leave of absence without explanation of the reason, and representatives of the orchestra gave them to understand, according to the Government Order, that their services would be retained until the matter had been cleared up.

"Until *what* has been cleared up?"

"Don't be funny. That remains to be seen, doesn't it?"

Taking their rebuke to heart, they went home to practise.

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They played from morning to night, each on his own instrument at home, and they played without a single mistake.

The two lovelorn instruments were put away in their wooden cases in the orchestra storeroom. They were standing side by side and had plenty of time to talk to their hearts' content. The gentleman bass described the musical evenings at which he had been played in northern Italy at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Monsieur Stendhal himself had been there listening, once, and clapped afterwards. He had seen Signor Garibaldi, too, in Modena—or was it in Rome?

The lady bass spoke of her fear and distress when the German army stole her in Poland and sent her to the Berlin Conservatoire, where one of the professors stole her and exchanged her for a pig from Dresden. Heaven only knows how she had found her way here, to the city; not a string to her name, out of tune with the whole world—not surprisingly, the gentleman bass in his wooden case was sympathetic—and then she was handed over to the orchestra, they put her right again, and now . . .

Now at last she is happy!

Meanwhile a general assembly of all musical bodies as such had been called, and observers invited from the League of Orchestral Coaches and also from the Union of Music Engravers.

Lou and his pal were *not* invited because it was their case which was to be discussed.

They were sitting in Lou's kitchen with their heads hanging, for what else is left to a man whose case is being discussed in his absence? Until Mrs. Lou asked a simple question, without even bothering to stop stirring the cornflour pudding she was making; "Couldn't it just be the two instruments?"

In a short while the door of the orchestra storeroom flew open. Lou and his pal opened the cases, one two, one two, pulled out the instruments and "E flat!" off they went. Of course Mrs. Lou had been right.

It was just the two instruments! After their long silence they sang as never before.

The two men caught the instruments up in their arms and ran to the conference hall where the general assembly was being held. An official tried to keep them out—until after the final summing-up by the chairman of the Union of Chairmen.

In other words, until we've been given the sack, thought the two men to themselves; and they pushed their way in.

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They hurried up on to the platform and, without waiting for the end of the final summing-up, they said "E flat!" and the double bass began to sing.

When they finished there was a hush. Then all those present left their seats and gathered round the double bass.

It was decided that the whole matter was a relatively rare material phenomenon, in which one substance reacted to another by vibrations of an as yet unknown frequency; this frequency depending, however, upon the frequency of the second substance and the degree of humidity of the air and probably of the size of the instruments as well. A hush-up commission was appointed and instructed to get in touch with the Research Institute and pass the buck to them as neatly as possible.

Lou and his pal received letters instructing them to take better care of the instruments entrusted to them; in future. They were also informed that they would be travelling with the orchestra on a tour of Denmark, taking in Paraguay on the way... and were given permission to buy the guilty instruments cheap.

At the last moment before the orchestra left for abroad, it was discovered that they were two too many, and the two double bass players were allowed to stay at home in order to practise.

And so while the great and famous orchestra went to Paraguay on its way to Denmark to bring home a batch of enthusiastic notices—which presented no difficulty at all—Lou and his pal began practising on their double bass the world-famous composition, "Big Noise Blew in from Winnetka." Lou played the battery of jazz drums and his pal strummed one double bass, while the other with the deep voice, leaned against the wall a little way off, playing with them of his own accord.

Every evening the teenagers flocked round.

Lou and his pal think it's the joke of the season, and when they've gone home and the lights are put out, the two double bass have leisure for love.

"Would you believe it, my dear," said the one double bass, in a voice like the rumble of an atom bomb in the distance, "would you believe it—with all these youngsters around I'm beginning to feel I'm getting old?"

"Don't be silly, my dear! A hundred and sixty-five is no age at all!"

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MARRIAGE

That Reminds Me

Just imagine yourself seated on a shadowy terrace,
And beside you is a girl who stirs you more strangely than an heiress.
It is a summer evening at its most superb,
And the moonlight reminds you that To Love is an active verb,
And your hand clasps hers, which rests there without shrinking,
And after a silence fraught with romance you ask her what she is thinking,
And she starts and returns from the moon-washed distances to the shadowy veranda,
And says, Oh I was wondering how many bamboo shoots a day it takes to feed a baby Giant Panda.
Or you stand with her on a hilltop and gaze on a winter sunset,
And everything is as starkly beautiful as a page from Sigrid Undset,
And your arm goes around her waist and you make an avowal which for masterfully marshalled emotional content might have been a page of Ouida's or Thackeray's,
And after a silence fraught with romance she says, I forgot to order the limes for the Daiquiris.
Or in a twilight drawing room you have just asked the most momentous of questions,
And after a silence fraught with romance she says, I think this little table would look better where that little table is, but then where would that little table go, have you any suggesions?
And that's the way they go around hitting below our belts;
It isn't that nothing is sacred to them, it's just that at the Sacred Moment they are always thinking of something else.

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LINES by OGDEN NASH

A Word to Husbands

To keep your marriage brimming,
With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong, admit it;
Whenever you're right, shut up.

The Strange Case of Mr. Ormantude's Bride

Once there was a bridegroom named Mr. Ormantude
whose intentions were hard to disparage,
Because he intended to make his a happy marriage,
And he succeeded for going on fifty years,
During which he was in marital bliss up to his ears.
His wife's days and nights were enjoyable
Because he catered to every foible;
He went around humming hymns
And anticipating her whims.
Many a fine bit of repartee died on his lips
Lest it throw her anecdotes into eclipse;
He was always silent when his cause was meritorious,
And he never engaged in argument unless sure he was
so obviously wrong that she couldn't help emerging
victorious,
And always when in her vicinity
He was careful to make allowances for her femininity;
Were she snappish, he was sweetish,
And of understanding her he made a fetish.
Everybody said his chances of celebrating his golden
wedding looked good,
But on his golden wedding eve he was competently
poisoned by his wife who could no longer stand being
perpetually understood.

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More long-lining, ingeniously-rhyming

What Almost Every Woman Knows Sooner or Later

Husbands are things that wives have to get used to
putting up with,
And with whom they breakfast with and sup with.
They interfere with the discipline of nurseries,
And forget anniversaries,
And when they have been particularly remiss
They think they can cure everything with a great big
kiss,
And when you tell them about something they have
done they just look unbearably patient and smile
a superior smile,
And think, Oh she'll get over it after a while.
And they always drink cocktails faster than they can
assimilate them,
And if you look in their direction they act as if they
were martyrs and you were trying to sacrifice, or
immolate them.
And they never want to get up or go to bed at the same
time as you do,
And when you perform some simple rite like putting cold
cream on your face or applying a touch of lipstick
they seem to think you are up to some kind of black
magic like a priestess of Voodoo,
And they are brave and calm and cool and collected about
the ailments of the person they have promised to
honour and cherish,
But the minute they get a sniffle or a stomach-ache of
their own, why you'd think they were about to perish,
And when you are alone with them they ignore all the
minor courtesies, and as for airs and graces they
utterly lack them,
But when there are a lot of people around they hand you
so many chairs and ashtrays and sandwiches and
butter you with such bowings and scrapings that
you want to smack them.

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notes for student husbands . . .

exported by America's wittiest, pithiest poet-humorist

Husbands are indeed an irritating form of life,
And yet through some quirk of Providence most of them are really very deeply ensconced in the affection of their wife.

Aside to Husbands

What do you do when you've wedded a girl all legal and lawful,
And she goes around saying she looks awful?
When she makes deprecatory remarks about her format,
And claims that her hair looks like a doormat?
When she swears that the complexion of which you are so fond
Looks like the bottom of a dried-up pond?
When she for whom your affection is not the least like Plato's
Compares her waist to a badly tied sack of potatoes?
Oh, who wouldn't rather be on a flimsy bridge with a hungry lion at one end and a hungry tiger at the other end and hungry crocodiles underneath
Than confronted by their dearest making remarks about her own appearance through clenched teeth?
Why won't they believe that the reason they find themselves the mother of your children is because you think of all the looks in the world, their looks are the nicest?
Why must we continue to be thus constantly ordealed and crisised?
I think it high time these hoity-toity ladies were made to realise that when they impugn their face and their ankles and their waist
They are thereby insultingly impugning their tasteful husbands' impeccable taste.

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I Do, I Will, I Have

How wise I am to have instructed the butler to instruct
the first footman to instruct the second footman to
instruct the doorman to order my carriage;
I am about to volunteer a definition of marriage.
Just as I know that there are two Hagens, Walter and
Copen,
I know that marriage is a legal and religious alliance
entered into by a man who can't sleep with the
window shut and a woman who can't sleep with the
window open.
Moreover, just as I am unsure of the difference between
flora and fauna and flotsam and jetsam,
I am quite sure that marriage is the alliance of two people
one of whom never remembers birthdays and the
other never forgetsam,
And he refuses to believe there is a leak in the water-pipe
or the gas-pipe and she is convinced she is about to
asphyxiate or drown,
And she says, Quick get up and get my hairbrushes off
the window sill, it's raining in, and he replies, Oh
they're all right, it's only raining straight down.
That is why marriage is so much more interesting than
divorce,
Because it's the only known example of the happy meet-
ing of the immovable object and the irresistible force.
So I hope husbands and wives will continue to debate and
combat over everything debatable and combatable,
Because I believe a little incompatibility is the spice of
life, particularly if he has income and she is pattable.

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ANGEL ON THURSDAY

by Brian Henry

I first began to notice this guy somewhere around South Kensington, a station on the London underground railway system. I remember it being South Kensington because the train goes through some sharp bends in the tunnel just there. I was standing in a crowded gangway next to the doors. This man was also standing, in beside the next set of doors. He was tall and he was dark, with intense dark eyes. That was what I noticed about him, his eyes.

Normally, the journey on the tube is pretty uneventful: the train goes along and one looks out of the window or vaguely at the other people, one stifles a yawn. This particular evening I was, as usual, standing there minding my own business. The train was packed, as often happens in the evenings, and I was facing down the carriage. I could not have turned around if I had wanted to, so I could only look down the carriage and wonder if sardines had things any better.

Well, I caught his eye—not deliberately, you know; it simply happened. I wasn't thinking of anything much at the time, just the heat and the shoving and the bodies. But my attention was arrested, the reason being that this fellow was looking straight at me. Intensely, and with a frown.

I wondered if I was mistaken and he was looking at somebody else over my shoulder, a pretty girl maybe. I'd never seen him before and I thought it odd that a stranger should stare at me that way. I glanced around to see if I could spot a pretty girl. Yet there didn't seem to be one. He was still looking, so I gazed back as blatantly as I could. But his eyes never wavered. I looked away and suddenly felt a blush coming. It was silly, I know. I had not blushed for years: combat-sergeants knock all that out of you, and so do wars and

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women. I was mad with myself going all red like that. I studied the advertisements for a bit and the map of the Piccadilly Line. And I looked around at some of the other people in the carriage. But after a while I sneaked another look down the carriage. He was still staring.

No, maybe that's the wrong word. Staring implies a certain coldness, whereas this man's eyes were sort of burning, like he was trying to hypnotise me. I studied the advertisements some more: alluring cosmetics for every occasion; for that irritating cough, try *Nollens*, a favourite for fifty years; look ravishing in *Twixnit*. But the ads made little impression on my mind—they were just a surface for me to put my eyes on. I had a professional interest in two of the ads, but it made no difference. I mean, people in trains don't look at you like that. When they get in they have masks on their faces. And they look around quickly, vacantly, as though their minds were in some other place.

The train was at Piccadilly by now—about four stops farther on. People had got on and got off, the doors had opened and closed a few times and the crowd had moved around without thinning out at all. But still this guy stared.

I got out at the next stop, Leicester Square. I was glad to. I burrowed my way through the people standing around the door and ran up the escalator two at a time. A few people muttered at me as I elbowed them out of the way. But I didn't care. I just wanted to keep moving, fast.

Up at the top, I stopped and breathed again. The street: the cool night air: it was nice. There is a certain calm hanging over the madness outside Leicester Square station, and I smiled as it took hold of me. Although I'm American I like London better than any place and I like Leicester Square. The traffic-lights had failed and a policeman was standing there in the middle conducting the traffic with all the dignity, all the authority of a concert maestro. Streams of pedestrians and streams of cars spurted across in front of each other according to the wave of a white glove. A young man in casual dress stared at dubious books in a window in Charing Cross Road. He leaned on one hip, then on the other. Behind, a chorus-girl took a kick at me from a theatre poster.

And then I saw this fellow coming out of the station-exit across the street. He spotted me straightaway and without any hesitation started across the street towards me. He was still frowning. It gave me a queer feeling.

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A moment later I was walking fast down the street towards Trafalgar Square. I don't know why I turned and walked off like that.

Heaven knows, all the streets around there were brightly lit and there were hundreds of people walking along. There was nothing to worry about. Not that I'm the worrying kind, even. A silent stare? So what? And anyway, I can take care of myself; I was in the Marines once. Yet there I was, doing a quick march down the street. And as I went along, I noticed my heart thumping quite a bit; not just from the speed I was going—it was something else, something about that man, about his face.

He might, of course, have been on his way to meet his wife. This did occur to me.

I looked around. He was twenty yards behind. In the light of a theatre foyer, I could see he was big and well-built and had a coat slung over his arm. And, damn me, if he wasn't still staring straight at me. No expression on his face. No sign. Nothing.

I tried to keep calm. I told myself this must surely be a coincidence. I mean, if he had wanted to overtake me, he could easily have done so, just by running. But no: he was, I knew, just padding along behind at about the same speed as myself.

The same speed! Ah! I tried going slow, then fast, then slow again. I could hear his footsteps slowing and quickening with my own.

When I got to Trafalgar Square, I figured that most people walking in that direction would go straight on into the Square, or else turn right towards the National Gallery. So I turned left towards the Strand. I don't mind saying that it took a lot of courage not to look back.

Telling myself that my mystery man had, in all probability, gone the other way, I slowed down again. But the hairs on the back of your neck never lie.

Well, I did turn around finally, when I got down to the Strand: a fellow can keep up these things just so long. No luck. He was there, almost on my heels.

For a moment I was flummoxed. I was supposed to be meeting a friend of mine at Leicester Square and going on to the theatre; I was a few minutes late as it was and I didn't want to break my date. And yet, those hairs on my neck were as stiff as a nylon brush, and I had now got the goose-pimples quite badly as well.

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I was undecided for only a couple of seconds. When I sensed that he was right behind, an idiotic panic came over me and I ran across the street. A couple of taxis practically climbed over one another trying to avoid me, and the air went blue for a while. But I didn't care. I just went and kept going. In no time at all I found myself on the street that leads to Charing Cross underground station.

I scarcely remember the next half minute, except that I ran flat out all the way down to the station. When I got there I looked back up the street. I looked hard, but I couldn't see him. I stood there feeling rather foolish. And I said to myself, "Old chap," I said, "take a grip on yourself." And that's not all I said. A man with a bowler hat and a rolled umbrella walked by and sanity returned straightaway. I buttoned my jacket and went in to buy a ticket back to Leicester Square.

I was just approaching the ticket barrier when I saw him again, threading through the crowd, frowning, coming at me, relentless. And I thought: no, this must stop! I shall wait for him. I must.

I reasoned that he must want to see me. It would have been a fantastic coincidence for him to have followed me otherwise —all the way from Leicester Square. I mean, you can catch a train from Leicester Square to Charing Cross direct: takes about three minutes. Nobody but a fool would walk it unless for some special reason.

I looked around for protection. From people mainly. I wanted some strong, reliable-looking men to be standing around nearby. A policeman or two for preference. Yet all I could see were a few tired businessmen going home, a couple of schoolgirls, and some middle-aged people queueing for tickets. Some protection! Not one of them could have lifted a finger in my defence.

Then I had an idea.

There was an art exhibition at Charing Cross station, and I happened to know the man in charge of it—I could see him through the doorway. I knew this chap quite well once. He was a huge fellow with shoulders on him like a weight-lifter. He had a uniform on and was eating a banana. His name was Lou; he was Italian, and used to operate one of those road drills, the ones that shake you to bits. Before that he acted as a guide in the hills of Southern Italy during the Allied invasion of 1943. I knew I could rely on plenty of protection from Lou if I needed it.

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I went in. I said "Hi, Lou, Baby!" and belted him one and shook hands. Soon we were cackling away and slapping each other's shoulders, the way two old buddies do when they meet again after a long time. After that I turned around to see if this other guy would show up.

He did. I chatted away to Lou about this and that, although I wasn't thinking much about what I was saying. I was concentrating on this stranger, waiting to see what he would do. Lou and I were both looking at him. He stopped in the doorway for about two seconds, quite obviously weighing up the situation. Then he came on in.

This art exhibition was only small. The man with the eyes went down to the end opposite to where we were standing. He started looking at the pictures and stood in such a way that he could look straight at me just by raising his head.

Lou could probably tell that I hadn't got my mind on what I was saying. He looked over to this other guy, then back to me, and said, "Who's he?"

And I said, "I don't know. He's been following me ever since I got out of the tube at Leicester Square."

Lou has a big slow grin and it came on then, like a lighthouse at night and he let out a great laugh and thumped me on the shoulder; "Hah! And with a face like yours, too! Well, whaddya know?" He gave me another thump and said, "You know, Chuck, I always thought there was something funny about you," and he roared his stupid head off again.

I said, "Get lost, Lou,"—or words to that effect—"this isn't like that. You're a bastard even to suggest it."

I might have saved my breath. Lou had found a good joke and he was going to flog it to death as long as I was standing there; he was like a sadistic kid with a friend's new toy. I stuck it for about two minutes. And all the time this other fellow just stood there in the one place and looked across at me.

Finally I got sick of it and left. I thought: to hell with this nonsense! I'm going back to Leicester Square. I'm late enough already... I walked along to the end of the platform and waited.

I knew he would come and he did. But I thought: I'm going to ignore him. So I stood and read the advertisements opposite. Then I heard his footsteps and a moment later I knew that he was standing behind me.

I felt pretty edgy, but I didn't budge. Not until the train came. Then I had to: I could feel his breath on my neck.

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There were a lot of people on the platform and I was glad—it was comforting. I opened my mouth to ask him what the hell, then shut it again.

He was staring; a mad, intense stare. And he was big, much bigger than me. A really powerful-looking man, with big shoulders and big muscular hands. He stepped forward. I had to step back otherwise he would have walked into me. Contact, even a touch, would have been revolting. His mouth was sort of moist and grinning. And inside the mouth it was black—black, like a view of another, unlit universe.

I had to take another step back, and another. I could feel the rush of air from the front of the train making my trousers flap round my legs. Another step or two and I would have been off the edge of the platform.

Then he spoke. He had a hollow, bottomless voice. It seemed to echo, and he had a queer accent that I never heard before. "An angel," he said, "is sent down to every man. Come!" And he walked forward into me.

In that split second I knew what I was in for. That word, angel: that did it. I didn't want any angels coming for me—not just yet, anyhow. I don't believe in angels, and if there are any I want mine to be female, dressed in white, with wings.

It was a long time ago that I was in the Marines, and I only remember one self-defence trick to this day. When a guy comes at you, you grab the lapels of his coat, stick your foot in his belly and do a backward roll.

And that's what I did. I remembered the trick and I did it. He was big and heavy, but he went. Amen. He must have landed right in front of the train because it went past just then.

Well, it was all chaos after that. There were screams and people with their eyes popping out trying to see under the train. And there was lots of pushing and shoving in the crowd, and everybody in the train got out to have a look. A woman vomited into her handkerchief. Looking dreadful, she said, "It's the smell, the scorching." There was no smell, but somebody with brains led her away.

The driver got out, and the guard came, and someone kept shouting, "Stand back, there! Please stand back! Let them through, please!" Everybody was talking at once, explaining, theorising. Nobody was listening. Officials tried to push the crowd back, but they kept pressing forward. I remember a young woman holding her little girl by the hand. I remember her saying, "Don't go near that wicked man," and the little girl putting her tongue out at me.

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As for me, I just stood there and gaped at where he had gone. I couldn't think of a single thing, except that my shirt felt wet and cold. Police came and some railway officials, then more police. They were all full of questions and I tried to give answers, without being very sure of what I was saying.

They finally got the train out of the way. When it had drawn back everybody looked. They were all saying how they didn't want to look but, to a man, they craned their necks.

What had happened that evening had been pretty unnerving for me up till then. But it was trifling compared with what I saw next.

For there was . . . nothing.

I couldn't believe it. I rubbed my eyes thinking I must be dreaming. But, of course, I wasn't. There is all the difference in the world between dreams and reality. There was the platform, and the police; there were the reporters, the advertisements, and everybody talking at once; and my shirt, cold and clammy. It was real, all right. I was there in the flesh, and I had thrown a man over my head and on to the track. Fifty people had seen him go, including the driver of the train.

Somebody said, " Well, where is he? "

Just so. Where? Looking down on the line, I had expected —well, you can guess what I had expected. Yet there was nothing on the track. Not even a shred of torn clothing. Just the two rails and the two electric rails, one in the middle and one on the outside. They took a look underneath the train after that, just in case. But there was nothing.

All this was two years ago. These have been two years of fear for me. Every day that passes I become more and more of a nervous wreck. For I have seen that man since that day; several times, and always on the tube. I use the tube every day for going to work. I have never been close enough to him to speak. He has a way of disappearing when it seems our paths might cross. Perhaps he gets behind me—I don't know. Not that I want to meet him, far from it.

I don't know what I am going to do. Somewhere in the world is that man—if he is a man. I've thought of going back to the States. But I don't think it would do any good. Last summer, when I went home to New York for a holiday, I saw him again in Brooklyn, on the subway. I have a feeling deep inside me, that it doesn't matter where I go in the world. I know that, sooner or later, that man is going to get me. Probably when I'm tired—I'll forget to stand with my back to the wall.

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playing with fire

Billy, in one of his nice new sashes,
Fell in the fire and was burnt to ashes;
Now, although the room grows chilly,
I haven't the heart to poke poor Billy.

HARRY GRAHAM

Just His Luck

Dixon reached out for and put on his glasses. At once he saw that something was wrong with the bedclothes immediately before his face. Endangering his chance of survival, he sat up a little, and what met his bursting eyes roused to a frenzy the timpanist in his head. A large, irregular area of the turned-back part of the sheet was missing; a smaller but still considerable area of the turned-back part of the blanket was missing; an area about the size of the palm of his hand in the main part of the top blanket was missing. Through the three holes, which, appropriately enough, had black borders, he could see a dark brown mark on the second blanket. He ran a finger round a bit of the hole in the sheet, and when he looked at his finger it bore a dark-grey stain. That meant ash; ash meant burning; burning must mean cigarettes . . .

Had he done all this himself? Or had a wayfarer, a burglar, camped out in his room? Or was he the victim of some Horla fond of tobacco? He thought that on the whole he must have done it himself, and wished he hadn't . . .

KINGSLEY AMIS, *Lucky Jim*

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Burning Desires

Burn the postman! burn the postage,
Burn the knocker—burn the bell!
Burn the folks that come for money!
Burn the bills—and burn 'em well.

Burn all Boz's imitators!
Burn all tales without a head!
Burn a candle near the curtain!
Burn your Burns, and burn your bed!

THOMAS HOOD, *c.* 1840

Alight with Enthusiasm

"Talking of fires," he began, his eyes alight with impish humour, "did I tell you about the time the Corfu Fire Brigade was modernised? It seems that the Chief of the fire service had been to Athens and had been greatly . . . er . . . *impressed* by the new fire-fighting equipment there. He felt it was high time that Corfu got rid of its horse-drawn fire engine and should obtain a new one . . . um . . . preferably a nice, shiny *red* one. There were several other improvements he had thought of as well. He came back here alight with . . . um . . . with *enthusiasm*." The first thing he did was to cut a round hole in the ceiling of the fire station, so that the firemen could slide down a pole in the correct manner. It appears that in his haste to become modernised he forgot the pole, and so the first time they had a *practice* two of the firemen broke their legs."

"No, Theodore, I refuse to believe that. It couldn't be true."

"No, no, I assure you it's perfectly true. They brought the men to my laboratory to be X-rayed. Apparently what had happened was that the Chief had not explained to the men about the pole, and they thought they had to *jump* down the hole . . ."

GERALD DURRELL, *My Family and Other Animals*

Economy Measure

Willie in his roguish way
Tipped Grandpa on the fire one day.
Mother said, "My dear, that's cruel!
But of course it does save fuel—"

Time & Tide, 1944

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Mellish's hair was standing on end with excitement, and he stammered. He began groping in his coat-tails, and, before the Viceroy knew what was about to happen, he had tipped a bagful of his powder into the big silver ashtray.

"J-j-judge for yourself, sir," said Mellish. "Y'Excellency shall judge for yourself! Absolutely infallible, on my honour."

He plunged the lighted end of his cigar into the powder, which began to smoke like a volcano, and send up fat, greasy wreaths of copper-coloured smoke. In five seconds the room was filled with a most pungent and sickening stench—a reek that took fierce hold of the trap of your windpipe and shut it... All Peterhof hummed like a hive. Red Lancers came in, and mace-bearers came in, and ladies ran downstairs screaming, "Fire!"; for the smoke was drifting through the house and oozing out of the windows, and bellying along the verandas, and wreathing and writhing across the gardens... The Viceroy was prostrate with laughter, and could only waggle his hands feebly at Mellish, who was shaking a fresh bagful of powder at him.

RUDYARD KIPLING, *A Germ-destroyer*

Redhead

As she sat on a bus, Mrs. Florence Wyer, 55, heard a voice from behind saying: "Your hair is on fire." She also heard a sizzling noise and felt heat. Immediately she put her hands to her head and rubbed out the flames.

Yesterday, at Birmingham juvenile court, a 14-year-old schoolboy admitted assaulting Mrs. Wyer.

RAY HILL, *Daily Mirror, 18th November, 1964*

A Sizzling Success

Feb. 16th, 1830: Last night the English Opera House was burnt down—a magnificent fire. I was playing at whist at the Traveller's with Lord Granville, Lord Auckland and Ross, when we saw the whole sky illuminated and a volume of fire rising in the air. We thought it was Covent Garden, and directly set off to the spot. We found the Opera House and several houses in Catherine Street on fire and, though it was three in the morning, the streets filled by an immense multitude. Nothing could be more picturesque than the scene, for the flames made it as light as day, and threw a glare upon the strange and motley figures moving about. All the gentility of London was there from Princess Esterhasy's ball and all the clubs... I trust the paraphernalia of the Beefsteak Club perished with the rest, for the enmity I bear that society for the dinner they gave me last year. CHARLES GREVILLE, *Diary*

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WHEN AM I TO HAVE ME LITTLE DROP?

AUNT MOLLY came to live with us when her husband died, for Jim was Molly's great-nephew. Or so he said. I never did get upsides with the Doherty relationships. There were Red Doherties, Fighting Doherties and Croppy Doherties, not to mention the Pratie Doherties—an ostracised branch that cleared out of America, where no-one, except the Doherties already there, might be expected to know the scandal. But Aunt Molly and my husband were Fighting Doherties, and the blood of the Fighting branch runs thick; so when Jim got news that Sean was dead, all the Doherty, ameliorated by years of Hertfordshire, came out on top. Even his voice took on the lilt of Mayo.

"I'd best go to her," he announced, "the creature!"

Jim hadn't talked that way since our engagement, and then only to get around me. It was the same now. Our polite pretence that the sexes were equal—a gesture to me, as our marriage was being played on my home ground—was swept aside by a stroke of that faraway post-office pen. He didn't even ask if I minded. He told me to pack his bag while he looked up a train that would intercept the Irish Mail. I was furious.

Jim was gone a week before he thought to send me a view of Achill Head in the shark-fishing season to let me know he'd arrived, and it didn't occur to him to mention when he'd be back.

It was quite by chance that I looked out one afternoon and saw him at the gate. And he wasn't alone. On his arm was a tiny creature with a teetering walk and the carriage of a cavalry officer. My first impression was of a child pretending to be an old lady. But when I opened the door I saw the white

by JOAN O'DONOVAN

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hair under the neat, round hat and the proud nose and bloodhound eyes of an ancient squaw.

"'Tis Aunt Molly herself!" Jim shouted enthusiastically. He avoided my eye.

What else could I do? I took the gloved hands and drew her in, murmuring something about being glad to see her.

Aunt Molly glanced dispiritedly around our modern little hall.

"You're very good."

"Ah, she's a great girl is Aunt Molly! Isn't she after singing *The Boys of Wexford* to the guard at Dun Laoghaire!"

The old lady looked offended.

"And if I did, 'twas the whiskey . . . God between us and all harm!"

Jim and I were having it out in undertones in the kitchen when John-Joe, our four-year-old son, roused from his nap by the noise of Aunt Molly's arrival, crept out and said in an awe-struck voice, "There's an old woman in the sitting room. She's poking the electric fire."

I glared at Jim and hurried through. Aunt Molly had replaced the poker and was regarding the fire with immense disgust. Her hands grated like emery paper as she chafed them, and I thought with momentary panic of our hard winters. This was a mild September day.

I switched on another bar.

"Isn't that a very poor blaze for a cold evening?" she remarked, as if pitying me.

"It isn't evening yet," piped John-Joe.

Aunt Molly turned, and I saw that her sight was failing.

"Come here, my child." Her milk-filmed eyes found him, and she touched his head. "It might be Patrick himself! He's a beautiful boy, God love him."

"I'm John-Joe."

"John-Joe . . . imagine! My own father's name!"

The old lady smoothed her skirts and smiled. She had, so to speak, licked buttery paws, and was ready to settle; and John-Joe, gratified at being called a beautiful boy, leaned against her knee.

I went back to the kitchen. Jim's English training had reasserted itself. He was putting the kettle on.

"You don't really mind, do you? It'll be company."

"Okay, it'll be company."

After all, we did live four miles from nowhere and I often got lonely. Besides . . . I'd taken to Aunt Molly.

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"Who's Patrick?" I asked.

"Patrick? That'd be her son. He died when he was a child. Are you sure you don't mind? She isn't an ordinary old lady, but she's a great skin all the same."

She certainly wasn't an ordinary old lady. I took her in some cocoa, then went up to make the spare room as welcoming as I could. Jim had to go to the office, and I could hear John-Joe doing the honours in fine style. John-Joe might have a Hertfordshire accent, but his flow was pure Doherty. But when I went down again I saw that Aunt Molly looked as cold as ever. She had barely touched the cocoa.

"Shall I warm that up for you?" I asked.

"I wouldn't trouble you, child."

"Don't you like cocoa?"

"'Tis what you're used to, I suppose," she said in a resigned voice.

I remembered the guard at Dun Laoghaire. There was no whiskey in the house, but we had beer.

"Shall I find you something a bit stronger?"

"Aren't you very good!" Aunt Molly said, gratified.

But the light ale wasn't a success at all. The old lady handed it back after a single sip.

"She doesn't like it," John-Joe interpreted.

"Indeed," said Aunt Molly with dignity, "they do make better shtuff from potatoes."

John-Joe drew a deep breath.

"If you haven't the whiskey, she could do with a nice strong cup of *tay* and a bit of *mate*."

"He's a wise child, God love him!" said Aunt Molly innocently.

So Aunt Molly became one of the family, and, though she was a bit of a saint, it wasn't always easy. She was eighty when she came to us, and she had never been away from home before except for an oft-recalled honeymoon weekend in Westport. My ways scandalised her. John-Joe was never at Mass. There was no turf for the fire. I sat down to eat with Jim instead of waiting on him, and expected her to do the same. She was convinced that the English were ignorant heathens.

When she was in good spirits she forgave me and went, gently and obstinately, her own way. She never, for instance, let me do her washing, but every Monday locked us out of the bathroom while she struggled with what she modestly called *me t'ings*. Then, to the astonishment of the tradespeople,

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she draped her vests and bloomers over the bushes in the front garden and hung her stockings from the gate. No hint of mine ever persuaded her to use the clothesline at the back. Her answer was always the same, "I wouldn't trouble you."

But on her bad days the gloom was terrible. I had to hide the poker, for she once broke the gasfire in her room trying to make a bit of a blaze; and though, as autumn came on, we had coal fires in the sitting room, Aunt Molly didn't think much of them.

"God help us!" she'd moan. "And him not to have a sod of turf!"

When these spells were over, she'd refer to them, deprecatingly, as *the vagaries*; but while they were on there was no pleasing her. She threw away the roast potatoes and filled the saucepan with scrubbed ones in their skins. And there was a long story, the hard core of her grievance, about Jim giving away a fine new pot . . . a bastable, whatever that was . . . to the Gaffneys, a family that had "turned."

It was a long time before I realised where the hurt lay, for I didn't know what she was talking about; but it seemed that forebears of the Gaffneys had taken Protestant bread during the famine, and it wasn't to be forgiven them. Even then, I didn't feel personally involved until the night I undressed John-Joe and found a clutter of tin discs round his neck.

John-Joe screamed with rage when I tried to unpin them.

"Will you leave them be, Mammy! They're me holy medals! The yaller one was blessed by de Pope!"

For John-Joe loved Aunt Molly with a consuming passion. Her word was law. The accent was a case in point. I had struggled, with no success at all, against his Tring whine; but after a month of Aunt Molly he might have been Mayo born and bred.

I decided to say nothing about the medals; but it was a different matter when I saw John-Joe cross himself when we passed the Catholic church.

"Why did you do that?" I asked.

John-Joe looked down his nose.

"'Tis only right."

"Then why not cross yourself at All Saints?"

"You don't do it for *Proddies*!" he said scornfully. "Only for the true church founded by our blessed . . ."

"How do you know which is which?" I asked. We had agreed not to confuse John-Joe with religious controversy, and I was annoyed.

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John-Joe looked surprised.

"Doesn't Aunt Molly bring me in to Mass!"

"Oh she does, does she?" This was certainly news. "And how do you get in?"

It was two miles from our house to the bus stop.

"Ah, Aunt Molly's great at the hitchhiking!" John-Joe said proudly. "She stands in the road and waves her stick. Sure, they have to stop!"

So that was what Aunt Molly meant when she said it was grand the way a person could get around! I'd thought she was admiring the well-made roads. I learned more about Aunt Molly every day.

Jim looked embarrassed when I brought up the subject of religion. Like the Gaffney forebears, he had been seduced by the English way of life, though the fact was never mentioned.

"I shouldn't have minded so much," I said, "if only she'd told us."

"She did say something to me about it," Jim mumbled. "I thought there was no harm."

"Couldn't she have told me too?"

"Well, the way it is—" Jim looked more uncomfortable than ever—"that's the business of the man of the house."

"Oh, *him*!" I said coldly.

I knew all about the man of the house. I knew that the man of my house no longer cleaned his own shoes. I came on Aunt Molly creeping down one morning with something rolled in her apron. She was so unnerved that she let go, and her secret was out.

Now, heaven knows, I didn't care who cleaned Jim's shoes so long as I didn't have to do it, and I told her so.

"My child," she said piously, "I wouldn't interfere. 'Twouldn't be right."

She must have felt very guilty, for she disappeared for an hour and came back with a packet of cigarettes.

"Because you're so good!" she said, stuffing it into my pocket.

"Now where on earth," I asked, "did you get these? There isn't a shop for miles."

"Didn't a decent poor man offer me a ride in his little bit of an old ke-airr?"

"You mean you stood in the middle of the road and stopped him?"

"I might," said Aunt Molly with great dignity.

Yes, in spite of the vagaries the old lady settled down pretty

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well, but I knew she fretted for she talked endlessly of home.

One afternoon I returned from helping Jim out at the office and was surprised to hear a man's voice coming from the sitting room. I opened the door, and there sat Aunt Molly, as sprightly as a girl, entertaining a burly labourer, with a raw-meat face and long upper lip.

"'Tis Paddy, one of ourselves!" she cried, clasping her hands. "Isn't he from Bunacurry!"

There was a quantity of clay on the carpet, and Paddy seemed very much at home with Jim's beer.

"How do you do?" I said frostily. Aunt Molly was one thing, but a male Fighting Doherty, six foot three and all of seventeen stone, quite another.

Aunt Molly looked reproachful.

"We were talking of the neighbours."

Paddy nodded at me and drained his glass.

"I'll have another of thim."

There was a strained silence.

"Ah, 'tis herself you should be asking," Aunt Molly said, smoothing her skirt. "Isn't she the woman of the house?"

"Git along wid yer, Molly! Hwat sort of hathen place is dis!"

"Indeed, indeed!" The old lady shook her head mournfully. "I that never let the day by without a fresh cake, that had me own hearth and everything to hand till he gave away the bastable on me."

I fetched Paddy another bottle, the last of six. I knew the life I'd have if I shamed Aunt Molly before a neighbour. There had been trouble enough when the priest called.

But Paddy went at last, bellowing goodwill from the gate and swearing he'd be back.

"And hwat is it you say when you're drinking?" he roared at John-Joe; and John-Joe, flushed and over-excited, screamed, "*Slaintè!*"

"The dote! Isn't he very like his father?" said Aunt Molly. Then she hurried upstairs and locked herself in her room.

It was John-Joe who spilt the beans. The one custom Jim retained from his homeland was an insistence that children should be silent at table. His eyebrows twitched when John-Joe, still above himself, interrupted the hush of supper with, "*Slantè*, Daddy!"

I glanced at Aunt Molly. She appeared to be praying.

John-Joe turned to me.

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"I like Uncle Paddy. Whin will he come again?"

"What Uncle Paddy's this?"

"Ah no-one at all, child. You wouldn't remember."

"He's great gas!" volunteered John-Joe.

I gave him a quelling look.

"Who wouldn't I remember?" Jim asked irritably.

"He was from Bunacurry, dear."

Aunt Molly's face told me I'd betrayed her more than I knew. Jim thought for a moment then, deliberately, put down his knife and fork. "That wouldn't by any chance be Paddy the Horse?"

"The things they say about decent young fellows!" Aunt Molly cried, offended.

Jim was scarlet to the hair as he thumped the table.

"You let that villain into my house?"

"And wasn't he minding a hole in the road, with the heavens pouring fit to drown a martyr!" Aunt Molly said with spirit.

Jim got up. "What's missing?" he snapped.

"Missing, dear?" I'd never known Jim like this before. "Why, nothing . . ." For I'd been out on my bike and replaced the beer before he got home.

But Jim stalked through to the sitting room, and Aunt Molly and I looked guiltily at each other. With the man of the house in a rage, it was all women together.

"He was lonesome, the creature, the way I am myself . . ."

"And does he steal?" I whispered.

"Sure, he have the weakness, but what harm! Hadn't I my eyes clapped on him?"

She looked so distressed that I took her hand.

"He'll come again . . ."

"When I'm dead and not here to see it!"

Jim came back looking puzzled. She rounded on him.

"Well, James Doherty, and aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"If I can't see what's gone, it's nothing to go by!" snarled Jim. "Paddy the Horse could drink from the bottom of your glass without disturbing the froth!"

"'Tis grand for you to talk!" Aunt Molly flashed. "A man of no religion, like Pratie Tom!"

That began an involved quarrel. By nine o'clock they were insulting each other four generations back. Then Aunt Molly went off in tears and Jim slammed out to the pub. I figured they'd enjoyed themselves no end.

I was right. The quarrel was purely academic. Aunt Molly

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was up betimes to clean Jim's shoes, and when Jim came down he swung her off her feet and told her she looked more beautiful than ever.

"Sure, aren't I great!" Aunt Molly cried, delighted.

She hovered around to cut the crusts off Jim's bread for him, then announced that she was going out.

"If you wait a minute, you old fidget," said Jim, "I'll run you down to church in the car."

"Ah, I wouldn't trouble you. I'll just take a little turn. For the exercise," Aunt Molly added virtuously.

Jim winked at me. We knew, and she knew we knew, that she was off to inspect the hole in the road. But I didn't feel too good about it. I had discovered that the silver fish servers were missing from the tallboy on the landing.

I taxed Aunt Molly about it when I got her alone. It all went back she explained, to the time Bridie Hanrahan took up with the tinker.

"I thought you said you'd kept your eye on Paddy."

Her affronted glance told me what she was too modest to put into words, that a man who'd drunk six bottles of beer might have occasion to walk upstairs; but she added in self-defence, "Wisha, he wasn't gone long enough for you to sneeze twice!"

She was full of gloom, for Paddy, it seemed, had already left the district; and Jim and I found ourselves trying to console her for her loss, forgetting about our own.

But there was no comforting her. She began to look like an old lady, and talk about her end. Then Jim and his secretary went down with 'flu and there was a crisis at the office. There was only one thing for it. I took over Jim's work, and left Aunt Molly to do the best she could.

As soon as I let myself in that first evening, I felt the difference. The house had subtly changed: another was in control. As for Aunt Molly, she looked twenty years younger, and when I sat down she set before me homemade bread and such eggs and rashers as I'd never tasted before.

"So, you didn't find my stove so terrible after all?"

I couldn't resist teasing her. She was always describing the amenities of Knockmore, with the open hearth and spit as must have cooked meat for men back from fighting the Danes, and she still went through a ritual of backing away when I lit the gas.

"'Tis an arful contraption!" she rebuked me.

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John-Joe piped up. "Hwat would Aunt Molly want with dat? Didn't she cook over a grand big fire!"

"A fire?"

I was startled. The only fire we had was in the sitting room.

"Whisht!" Aunt Molly said serenely. "Eat your tea like a dotey boy!"

However she did it, her skill was above reproach; and when I praised her she remarked, "I always was a great housekeeper."

There were two things Aunt Molly was vain about, her cooking and her face. Her sight was poor, but every time I begged her to let me take her to have her eyes tested, she assured me she had the eyes of a hawk. She meant, of course, that glasses would spoil her looks. The only quarrel we ever had was the time I bought her a bonnet. It was woollen and tied under the chin, and I thought it would be more comfortable than the floral pancake she skewered to her bun.

But Aunt Molly would have none of it.

"What a show!" she said indignantly. "That's an old woman's hat!"

I pointed out that it would keep her warm.

"May it have the chance!"

I left it with her, thinking the east wind might be a better persuader; and the next day I caught her using it to polish Jim's shoes.

Aunt Molly heard me out meekly enough, as well she might for the bonnet was ruined.

"I couldn't, child," she said when I'd finished. "Sean wouldn't want it. That time at Westport he said he always did like the little flower."

But a saint, it seems, is born to trouble. No sooner was Jim better than John-Joe had his fifth birthday and started school. Aunt Molly bore Jim's recovery without too much hard feeling, but she took it as a personal slight that her dotey boy should be submitted to education. We heard a great deal about it.

"Ah no, it wouldn't do at all," she said with the bitter resignation of which she was mistress, "to leave the babba at home with a stupid old woman! Better let him loose among the villains of the town! Better turn him over to the vagabonds and corner boys!"

As if that wasn't enough, John-Joe was wild about school. He fell madly in love with one Miss Stubbs, to whom he transferred his fanatical devotion. Before the week was out

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he wanted to be a Methodist and had begun to cultivate a Cockney accent.

I tried to keep it from her, but Aunt Molly had been weaned on disaster and could scent it from afar. It was she who undertook to comfort me. "Isn't it the way of the world, child: when they're small they tread on your feet, and when they're grown they trample on your heart!"

The climax came one teatime. Jim was away and John-Joe, making the most of it, was treating us to a blow by blow account of his day.

"Miss Stubbs says we burn Guy Fawkes because he was a Pipist!" he informed us in his most censorious voice.

Aunt Molly got up quietly and left the room. I knew then what it was to hate the woman in my son's life.

"But Aunt Molly isn't a Pipist!" John-Joe protested when I rounded on him.

"We don't say *Papist*, we say *Catholic* . . ."

"Miss Stubbs says Pipist."

We had an unseemly wrangle about Miss Stubbs.

Later, when John-Joe was in bed, I went up to Aunt Molly. She had gone to bed herself, looking old and submissive as if the will had died in her.

"What about supper, just the two of us?" I coaxed.

She shook her head.

"Then have it on a tray."

"I wouldn't trouble you."

"Aunt Molly, darling," I began, "you mustn't mind John-Joe . . ."

"Ah, he's a good child," she said listlessly.

She had ranged all her little treasures on a chair by the bed . . . a photo of her husband as a young man looking like a burglar, another of him at seventy looking like a bishop; and there was herself, a handsome girl, nursing the baby who hadn't lived. Aunt Molly was back to basic principles. The sight of the pictures frightened me far more than the candle and the holy water in the carefully corked Eno's bottle.

"Aunt Molly . . ."

"You must send for the priest, my child."

"Come along with you now!" Panic made my voice loud. "What about a nice strong cup of tea?"

I watched expectantly. This had rallied her before. But there was no answering flicker of pleasure now. The eyes were dull in their great sockets, and chalky fingers plucked at the sheet.

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I was in tears before I reached the phone, and when I snatched up the receiver it was to discover that the line was down. I was alone with Aunt Molly, and Aunt Molly might be dying.

There was a brutal wind that night, but I hardly noticed it. I got out my bike and begging Mrs. Green, our nearest neighbour, to mind the house, I cycled the long four miles to The Wheatsheaf. If the phone was working there, I might yet be in time. Dr. Leach lived a good mile farther on, and the priest a couple of hills away.

The phone was indeed working, for there was a man in the call box. I rapped on the glass but he just turned his back on me.

Furious, consumed with anxiety, I paced up and down the passage blinking at the old advertisements that plastered the walls. My brain was going like a steam train, snatching at anything that fitted its rhythm.

"Not a *drop* is *sold* till it's *seven* years *old*. Not a *drop* is *sold* . . ."

Then the fat man with the lardy neck pushed past me, and I was in the cubicle, the coppers hot in my hand. He had kept me waiting just six minutes, and it was like eternity. But worse was to come. The priest's line was dead, too; and though I got through to Dr. Leach's house, I was told I'd just missed him.

The maid took my message, but I no longer had any hope. Jim would have known what to do. I was helpless. And still the silly tune throbbed in my head; Not a *drop* is *sold* . . . Not a *drop* is *sold* . . .

I thought of Aunt Molly singing to the guard at Dun Laoghaire, and remembered that I hadn't wanted her.

Impulsively, I bought a bottle of Irish and turned into the hobnailed wind again.

There was a strange car parked in the lane and Mrs. Green met me with the news that the doctor was with Aunt Molly now.

But it wasn't Dr. Leach. When I opened the door I saw an elderly man in tweeds that would have blunted a bullet and, flirting with him, a restored Aunt Molly.

She beamed on me, as gracious as a duchess in her drawing room. 'Twas Dr. McNaulty, and wasn't he from Mayo!

He, too, was enthusiastic. He told me my old one was great.

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I had to sit down. I was more in need of his services than Aunt Molly.

Dr. McNaulty told me that he'd retired, in a manner of speaking, but had called to oblige his old friend, Tim Leach; and he made various polite remarks about the English countryside. But the old lady wasn't having nonsense like that. I had interrupted a description of Westport sixty years ago, and, firmly, she took it up again. And then they settled down to the families they knew, and all their ancient dead. They would have been at it all night had not the doctor caught my eye. He got up regretfully.

"You must sleep now, Molly," said he. "Mind what I tell you!" and Aunt Molly, who would obey anything in trousers, even John-Joe, folded her hands and said, "Yes, indeed, Doctor!"

I took him aside.

"She was in a bad way before you came. I brought back some whiskey to cheer her up. What do you think?"

"Grand, grand! Give her the drop before she settles."

Aunt Molly's eyes might not be what they were, but there was nothing wrong with her hearing. A look of great saintliness flooded her face.

It was past midnight before Dr. McNaulty left. I gave him a drink by the fire, and his story of the tinker, the gramophone and the slane led to an even more involved one about a judge correcting a magistrate on a point of law from the dock. But I didn't have to ask him to call again to chat with the old lady. He made it quite clear that nothing would stop him.

He had scarcely gone before the sitting room door shot open; and there she stood, an avenging fury in bedsocks.

"*When am I to have me little drop?*"

The voice was as vigorous as ever. If it trembled at all, it was with rage.

I pulled a chair up, and Aunt Molly took her drop by the fire I'd thought she would never poke again. She shuddered with pleasure and shot me mild, apologetic glances; and when she had drained the glass, she put it aside and leaned across to kiss me. "Aren't you very good!" she said in that meek voice that warned me she was up to something.

And she was. She was out at dawn, thumbing lifts on the roads to God knows where; and when I came down to make the morning tea, I found a roaring fire in the sitting room and Aunt Molly, her skirt turned back, contentedly frying rashers.

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GALLERY of GREATS

THE PENDULUM

by O. Henry

EIGHTY-FIRST street—let 'em out, please," yelled the shepherd in blue.

A flock of citizen sheep scrambled out and another flock scrambled aboard. Ding-ding! The cattle cars of the Manhattan Elevated rattled away, and John Perkins drifted down the stairway of the station with the released flock.

John walked slowly toward his flat. Slowly, because in the lexicon of his daily life there was no such word as " perhaps." There are no surprises awaiting a man who has been married two years and lives in a flat. As he walked John Perkins prophesied to himself with gloomy and downtrodden cynicism the foregone conclusions of the monotonous day.

Katy would meet him at the door with a kiss flavoured with cold cream and butterscotch. He would remove his coat, sit upon a macadamised lounge and read, in the evening paper, of Russians and Japs slaughtered by the deadly linotype. For dinner there would be pot roast; a salad flavoured with a dressing warranted not to crack or injure the leather, stewed rhubarb and the bottle of strawberry marmalade blushing at the certificate of chemical purity on its label.

After dinner Katy would show him the new patch in her crazy quilt that the iceman had cut for her off the end of his four-in-hand. At half-past seven they would spread newspapers over the furniture to catch the pieces of plastering that fell when the fat man in the flat overhead began to take his physical culture exercises. Exactly at eight Hickey & Mooney, of the vaudeville team (unbooked) in the flat across the hall, would yield to the gentle influence of delirium tremens and

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begin to overturn chairs under the delusion that Hammerstein was pursuing them with a five-hundred-dollar-a-week contract. Then the gent at the window across the air-shaft would get out his flute; the nightly gas leak would steal forth to frolic in the highways; the dumb-waiter would slip off its trolley; the janitor would drive Mrs. Zanowitski's five children once more across the Yalu; the lady with the champagne shoes and the Skye terrier would trip downstairs and paste her Thursday name over her bell and letter-box—and the evening routine of the Frogmore flats would be under way.

John Perkins knew these things would happen. And he knew that at a quarter-past eight he would summon his nerve and reach for his hat, and that his wife would deliver this speech in a querulous tone: "Now, where are you going, I'd like to know, John Perkins?"

"Thought I'd drop up to McCloskey's," he would answer, "and play a game or two of pool with the fellows."

Of late such had been John Perkins' habit. At ten or eleven he would return. Sometimes Katy would be asleep; sometimes waiting up; ready to melt in the crucible of her ire a little more gold plating from the wrought-steel chains of matrimony. For these things Cupid will have to answer when he stands at the bar of justice with his victims from the Frogmore flats.

Tonight John Perkins encountered a tremendous upheaval of the commonplace when he reached his door.

No Katy was there with her affectionate, confectionate kiss. The three rooms seemed in portentous disorder. All about lay her things in confusion. Shoes in the middle of the floor, curling tongs, hair bows, kimonos, powder-box, jumbled together on dresser and chairs—this was not Katy's way. With a sinking heart John saw the comb with a curling cloud of her brown hair among its teeth. Some unusual hurry and perturbation must have possessed her, for she always carefully placed these combings in the little blue base on the mantel, to be some day formed into the coveted feminine "rat."

Hanging conspicuously to the gas jet by a string was a folded paper. John seized it. It was a note from his wife running thus:

Dear John,

"I just had a telegram saying mother is very sick. I am going to take the 4.30 *train. Brother Sam is going to meet me at the depot. There is cold mutton in the icebox.*

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I hope it isn't her quinsy again. Pay the milkman 60 cents. She had it bad last spring. Don't forget to write to the company about the gas meter, and your good socks are in the top drawer. I will write tomorrow.

Hastily,
Katy.

Never during their two years of matrimony had he and Katy been separated for a night. John read the note over and over in a dumbfounded way. Here was a break in a routine that had never varied, and it left him dazed.

There on the back of a chair hung, pathetically empty and formless, the red wrapper with black dots that she always wore while getting the meals. Her weekday clothes had been tossed here and there in her haste. A little paper bag of her favourite butterscotch lay with its string yet unwound. A daily paper sprawled on the floor, gaping rectangularly where a railroad timetable had been clipped from it. Everything in the room spoke of a loss, of an essence gone, of its soul and life departed. John Perkins stood among the dead remains with a queer feeling of desolation in his heart.

In 1898, the gates of the Ohio State Penitentiary clanged shut on William Sidney Porter. Convicted of embezzlement, he spent his prison time writing — to emerge five years later with a wealth of short stories and a new name — O. Henry.

Hired by a New York paper to do a daily story, he often felt uninspired. He'd deliver the opening of the story and then disappear to wander the city. Frantic editors with deadlines to meet sent their staff to find him. And usually they were successful—which may explain why some of the O. Henry stories have beginnings quite unrelated to the endings.

Sensitive to the comedy, tragedy and utter boredom of life, he immortalised the gas-lit, immigrant-packed New York of his time with a masterly touch of irony. He died leaving a legacy of stories—classics of short fiction, of which this is just one.

He began to set the rooms tidy as well as he could. When he touched her clothes a thrill of something like terror went through him. He had never thought what existence would be without Katy. She had become so thoroughly annealed into his life that she was like the air he breathed—necessary but scarcely noticed. Now, without warning, she was gone, vanished, as completely absent as if she had never existed. Of course it would be only for a few days, or at most a week or

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two, but it seemed to him as if the very hand of death had pointed a finger at his secure and uneventful home.

John dragged the cold mutton from the icebox, made coffee and sat down to a lonely meal face to face with the strawberry marmalade's shameless certificate of purity. Bright among withdrawn blessings now appeared to him the ghosts of pot roast and the salad with tan polish dressing. His home was dismantled. A quinsied mother-in-law had knocked his Lares and Penates sky-high. After his solitary meal John sat at a front window.

He did not care to smoke. Outside, the city roared to him to come join in its dance of folly and pleasure. The night was his. He might go forth unquestioned and thrum the strings of jollity as free as any gay bachelor there. He might carouse and wander and have his fling until dawn if he liked; and there would be no wrathful Katy waiting for him, bearing the chalice that held the dregs of his joy. He might play pool at McCloskey's with his roistering friends until Aurora dimmed the electric bulbs if he chose. The hymeneal strings that had curbed him always when the Frogmore flats had palled upon him were loosened. Katy was gone.

John Perkins was not accustomed to analysing his emotions. But as he sat in his Katy-bereft ten by twelve parlour he hit unerringly upon the keynote of his discomfort. He knew now that Katy was necessary to his happiness. His feeling for her, lulled into unconsciousness by the dull round of domesticity, had been sharply stirred by the loss of her presence. Has it not been dinned into us by proverb and sermon and fable that we never prize the music till the sweet-voiced bird has flown—or in other no less florid and true utterances?

"I'm a double-dyed dub," mused John Perkins, "the way I've been treating Katy. Off every night playing pool and bumming with the boys instead of staying home with her. The poor girl here all alone with nothing to amuse her, and me acting that way! John Perkins, you're the worst kind of a shine. I'm going to make it up for the little girl. I'll take her out and let her see some amusement. And I'll cut out the McCloskey gang right from this minute."

Yes, there was the city roaring outside for John Perkins to come dance in the train of Momus. And at McCloskey's the boys were knocking the balls idly into the pockets against the hour for the nightly game. But no primrose way nor clicking cue could woo the remorseful soul of Perkins, the bereft. The thing that was his, lightly held and half scorned, had been taken away from him, and he wanted it.

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Near the right hand of John Perkins stood a chair. On the back of it stood Katy's blue shirt-waist. It still retained something of her contour. Midway of the sleeves were fine, individual wrinkles made by the movements of her arms in working for his comfort and pleasure. A delicate but impelling odour of bluebells came from it. John took it and looked long and soberly at the unresponsive grenadine. Katy had never been unresponsive. Tears—yes, tears—came into John Perkins' eyes. When she came back things would be different. He would make up for all his neglect. What was life without her?

The door opened. Katy walked in carrying a little hand satchel.

John stared at her stupidly.

"My! I'm glad to get back," said Katy. "Ma wasn't sick to amount to anything. Sam was at the depot, and said she just had a little spell, and got all right soon after they telegraphed. So I took the next train back. I'm just dying for a cup of coffee."

Nobody heard the click and the rattle of the cog-wheels as the third-floor front of the Frogmore flats buzzed its machinery back into the Order of Things. A band slipped, a spring was touched, the gear was adjusted and the wheels revolved in their old orbits.

John Perkins looked at the clock. It was 8.15. He reached for his hat and walked to the door.

"Now, where are you going, I'd like to know, John Perkins?" asked Katy, in a querulous tone.

"Thought I'd drop up to McCloskey's," said John, "and play a game or two of pool with the fellows."

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD (MARCH ISSUE)

Across. 1, *Basil.* 4, *Chain-gang.* 9, *Unclean.* 10, *Manilla.* 11, *Bibs.* 12, *Paint.* 13, *Agra.* 16, *Authors.* 17, *Curious.* 19, *Dapples.* 22, *Episode.* 24, *Sore.* 25, *Spite.* 26, *Well.* 29. *Regalia.* 30, *Amnesia.* 31, *Genealogy.* 32, *Trend.*

Down. 1, *Bluebeard.* 2, *Sackbut.* 3, *Lied.* 4, *Canvass.* 5. *Almanac.* 6, *None.* 7, *Allegro.* 8, *Guana.* 14, *Holly.* 15, *Train.* 18, *Steel band.* 20, *Paragon.* 21, *Soprano.* 22, *Estuary.* 23, *Oversea.* 24, *Sprig.* 27, *Plea.* 28, *Knit.*

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The final chapters

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MOSCOW ASSIGNMENT

by Andrew Garve

Before returning to Moscow on a *Sunday Recorder* assignment to write up winter conditions in the Ukraine, journalist Lord Quainton meets exotic Marya Raczinski. Marya is British : her father, a Polish survivor of Loda concentration camp, now naturalised, is chief chemist for Floria Products.

Tim Quainton comes across a ten-year-old cutting stating that Dr. Stefan Raczinski had been condemned to death *in absentia* by a Moscow court for war crimes committed in 1944 in Loda camp. Marya's father shrugs off the whole affair as Russian blackmail. Marya, deciding for herself that Tim believes the report is true, breaks off their engagement.

Back in Moscow, Tim interviews a witness who swears Raczinski is a war criminal; at Lvov, Tim proves Raczinski's account of his childhood is false. Pavlov, of the Soviet diplomatic, listens to Quainton's incriminating evidence, grants him an exit visa to return to confront Raczinski, but permission for the Ukraine journey comes through. Quainton sets off, with Korzhenko as guide. Their car breaks down, and totally lost, almost insensible in a driving blizzard, Quainton crawls into a huge pipe. He wakes to hear voices—realises Korzhenko is looking for his body to take it back to Moscow. This was no accident but planned murder.

KORZHENKO went back inside—and I sat there, rigid with horror and disbelief. It didn't seem possible that I'd actually heard those words said. That they'd meant *me*. Such things simply didn't happen—not to a Press correspondent. Not to conducted guests on a trip. It was an enormity. I must have misheard . . . Yet I knew very well I hadn't.

I couldn't begin to imagine what had led the Russians to

of Argosy's gripping serial

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this step—but it was as plain as the snow around me that from the start of the trip they'd meant to kill me. *My instructions were to take his body back*... Korzhenko had been given his orders in Moscow, and he'd simply been waiting for the right moment. In the blizzard he'd found it—and if it hadn't been for the shelter of the pipe, I'd be dead.

Now what was I going to do? I stifled my anger and tried to consider the alternative courses of action coolly and realistically.

I decided that I'd be better off trying for a getaway—however great the odds against me.

I'd no illusions about the odds. I was warmly clothed, but I hadn't a scrap of food with me. I'd a torch, passport and money, but no map. I must be nearly thirty miles from the only railhead I knew of, and I was in empty, almost roadless country that offered no cover apart from the drifts. Pursuit, once begun, would be relentless. If I got back to Moscow, I could make appalling trouble. They simply couldn't afford now to let up till they'd got me.

They might waste a little time at first, searching for my body—but they'd soon pick up the tracks I was bound to make on leaving. They'd know I'd survived, and they'd know which way I'd gone. At once, I faced a new problem. The moment I left the pipe I'd be visible.

I peered out, cautiously.

I could see Korzhenko's head, his face. He was talking to the chauffeur. He wasn't looking in my direction. But any movement in the snow would be bound to attract his attention. It was too big a risk. I'd have to wait until they went off on their search—I drew back into the pipe... Then I suddenly had an idea.

I crawled through the pipe to the blocked end. The snow was soft—a thaw seemed to have started. I began to claw at it with my gloved hand, scooping it past me and pushing it back into the pipe, In a few minutes, I had made a tunnel through to the next pipe. I crawled along it, and repeated the process, still under cover, and went through into the one beyond. I kept going. Several times along the route I had to clear more barriers of snow, but the pipes had been set down only a yard or so apart and I had no great difficulty.

In fifteen minutes, I was at the end of the pipe line and well out of sight of the building. I'd left a trail, because in places the surface snow had collapsed between the pipes. Korzhenko was bound to realise what had happened when he started to

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look around. But it might not be for some time. With a feeling of achievement I scrambled out under the trees, shook the wet snow from my clothes and walked over to Korzhenko's station wagon.

The overnight drift was beginning to recede from its axles. I hadn't a hope of digging it out myself, but I didn't think it would take Korzhenko and the chauffeur long to get it on the road again. I opened the hood and took out the distributor arm. That should immobilise it indefinitely. I glanced in the boot, but it was empty except for a can of petrol. In the compartment under the instrument board I found treasure—a lump of salami and a hunk of black bread. I stuffed them into a pocket and stepped out into the road.

The wheelmarks the car had made the night before were no more than shallow depressions now, and the snow didn't look impassable on foot. Momentarily, I debated which way to go. Back towards the distant railhead at Krasnaya Tserkov that I knew about—or on into the unknown? The known seemed preferable. With my back to the morning sun, I started to walk . . .

The snow covering was far from uniform. Where the road ran straight and level it lay only a few inches deep, and I ploughed through it without difficulty. At bends, or shallow dips, there were often drifts that I had to wade through. Mostly they lasted for only a yard or two, but in places I'd have lost the road altogether if it hadn't been for a line of tall guiding poles beside it. In other places the thaw had already gone so far that the logs of the corduroy road were visible. I hadn't appreciated till now how far south I was, and what warmth there was in the winter sun. I would gladly have dispensed with my huge *shuba*—and *valinki* were no longer the ideal footwear. They grew soggy and heavy, slowing me down.

On the road there was no variety, apart from the depth of snow—nothing of significance to catch the eye. No trees, no fences, no habitations, no animals, no birds—no sign of life at all. Never had I felt so utterly alone as on that silent, featureless plain. I tried not to think about my situation, for thought could bring no comfort. I was too tired in body and mind to try to work out why this disaster should have happened to me. Anger against Korzhenko and his bosses seemed a waste of energy. All that mattered was the distance I could put behind me.

I was far from giving up hope of survival, but the outlook

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didn't improve as the hours passed. By nightfall, I reckoned, I would have covered little more than fifteen miles at my present rate of progress. Even if I kept going all night, I'd still be some distance from Krasnaya Tserkov by morning—and by morning the hunt would surely have started . . .

My one stroke of luck had been finding the salami. There was a whole loop of it, and I gnawed and chewed with relish as I plugged along. That, with the bread, and snow for water, gave me the strength to keep going. Another thing that heartened me was that I seemed to be walking out of the blizzard belt. By two o'clock my path was only occasionally blocked by drifts. I began to make much better speed.

It was shortly before three o'clock when I caught the sound of a distant engine. At first I thought it must be an aeroplane. Then, gazing back uneasily over the road I'd travelled, I made out a moving dot that could only be a car. It was at least a mile away, and coming on slowly—but in minutes it would catch me up. I felt sure it must be Korzhenko and the chauffeur—though I couldn't imagine how they'd got over the distributor problem. If it was, I was sunk. There wasn't enough cover on the steppe to hide a fieldmouse—

I stopped and waited, my heart pounding. Then, as it came nearer, I relaxed. It wasn't the station wagon—and there was only one man in it. I still had a chance. As I watched, it skidded to a halt in the snow. The man got out with a shovel and dug vigorously. Then the car came on again, bumping and sliding. It had chains on its wheels—I could hear their distinctive whirring. It drew level with me, and pulled up.

The driver was a young fellow of about my own age, with a flat, peasant's face and a broad, concave nose. He wore the grey-green quilted jacket and quilted trousers of the countryside, and an incredibly ancient fur hat. He stuck his head out of the window, staring at me. After all I'd gone through I must have looked a sight.

"What on earth are you doing out here, *tovarisch*? "

"My car got stuck in a drift," I said. "Last night . . ." I pointed back along the road.

"Ah, so that was *your* car twenty kilometres back. You'd have done better to stay with it—there's nothing this way at all." He spoke with a strong country accent and a sprinkling of Ukrainian words. I had to listen carefully to understand.

"I don't know these parts," I explained. "I was driving from Krasnaya Tserkov when I was overtaken by the storm. I spent a terrible night in the car. This morning, as the road

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was blocked, I thought I'd better walk back and try to get help. But it's farther than I remembered. Where are you going to?"

"To Negoreloye, a village off the road, fifteen kilometres ahead. You'd better come with me."

"I'd be grateful. Is there a telephone there?"

"No—but tomorrow I have to drive to Krasnaya Tserkov myself, and I will take you with me."

He opened the door, and I climbed in thankfully. As long as there wasn't a telephone, I'd go anywhere.

I relaxed in my seat. The car was an ancient Moskvitch with poor springs—but to sit down was wonderful.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Ivan Ivanovitch Scorbin. And yours?"

I gave the first name that came into my head. "Pavlov," I said. "Alexei Alexeivitch."

He nodded. "You're from the town?"

"From Moscow," I said. "I'm a journalist. On the staff of *Vechernaya Moskva.* I've been checking up on the winter wheat situation down here."

"The winter wheat situation is bad, Alexei Alexeivitch—I can tell you that. The snow has come too late again—much of the grain is frozen."

"You work in a *kolkhoz*?"

"Yes—the Mikoyan, a few kilometres beyond Negoreloye. In summer I'm a tractor driver. In winter, a mechanic."

He was a voluble man. He didn't, it appeared, live in Negoreloye himself, but in a village nearer the *kolkhoz.* He was going to stay the night at Negoreloye in a comrade's house, and in the morning they were to drive together to a regional conference on spare parts at Krasnaya Tserkov. "You must spend the night with us," he said.

"You're very kind, comrade."

"You can tell us about Moscow, and what it is like to be a journalist. I have never met a journalist before. They must pay you well for your work. You have a fine, warm *shuba* there."

At that point we ran into a light drift, and I got out with the shovel and cleared the way. A mile or two farther on we turned off to the right along a narrow track. Soon the nature of the country began to change. Green copses dotted the plain, merging after a while into solid pine woods. When we came out into the open again there was a settlement ahead. It was the merest hamlet—a couple of dozen *izbas* of rough pine logs, facing each other in two neat rows with an expanse of pressed

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snow between them for a street. Ivan parked the car opposite the last hut, and we got out.

"You're sure your friend won't mind?" I said.

"If he does," Ivan said with a grin, "he will cease to be my friend." He led the way into the *izba*. I'd found sanctuary...

The name of the owner had been written under the fretted eaves—Alexander Alexandrovitch Gretko. Ivan called him Sasha. He was a man of about forty; broad, with a short, thick neck, and very fair, as so many Ukrainians are. Ivan introduced me, explaining my predicament, and Sasha welcomed me with a good handshake. He apologised because his wife was away staying with her sister. I suspected that the two men had been looking forward to an all-male evening, and the speed with which the vodka came out rather confirmed this.

I had never before had a chance to examine the inside of an *izba* and while Sasha prepared a *zakuska* and Ivan talked about the storm and the digging-out he'd had to do, I took a good look round. It was a single room, perhaps twenty feet square, with a curtained double door, tiny double windows, and bare log walls, their chinks sealed with moss and rags. In the daytime it must have been a dark place, but now an uncovered electric lamp blazed. The room, with its raised floor and wooden ceiling, was less spacious than I'd expected. The low, clay *pechka* in the centre of the floor had a good fire burning in it. The air—what there was of it—smelt of smoke, cooking, and heavy, damp clothes. However, I was very happy to be breathing it. There was little furniture—a large brass bed, a couch, a home-made table, and a chair or two.

The warmth of the room and of Sasha's hospitality made me very sleepy after the arduous night and day I'd spent. I fought it by talking, as Ivan had wanted me to—giving a description of a newspaperman's life which certainly bore little resemblance to my own. It seemed to go down very well, and the atmosphere became increasingly cordial. Presently Sasha prepared a huge meal. There were pickled cucumbers and tomatoes, fried potatoes and buckwheat *kasha*, sausage and cheese, vodka, and sweet tea to wash it all down. I did more than justice to it—and felt sleepier than ever when it was over.

With some relief, I discovered that Ivan was tired and ready for an early night. Sasha pressed me to take the brass bed, but I said I'd always wanted to sleep on a stove—which in the city I'd never had a chance to do—and begged to be allowed to. In the end I took the stove, now no more than comfortably warm; Ivan was given the bed, and Sasha had the couch. I

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spread my *shuba* over the stove, the collar humped for a pillow, and in moments I was dead to the world . . .

I woke as the first grey of morning showed at the window. I had had a long, dreamless night and felt in fine shape physically. Mentally was another matter. I lay there in the semi-darkness, thinking about my prospects.

Naturally, they hadn't improved while I'd been sleeping. By now, Korzhenko must have discovered that I was alive and on the run. The snow marks and the immobilised car could have left him in no doubt. The road was open again, and some vehicle was sure to pass that morning. By midday, at latest, my description would be out. It would be an unusual description, because of my big *shuba* and town suit, and I'd soon be picked up, because at midday I'd probably just be arriving in Ivan's car at Krasnaya Tserkov, where I'd stick out like a sore thumb . . . The position was only too clear. To have any chance of getting back to Moscow safely, I had to reach Krasnaya Tserkov station without delay—and in different clothes.

I sat up cautiously and glanced across at Ivan and Sasha. They were asleep and motionless, their faces turned away from me. Ivan's quilted tunic and trousers lay over the back of a chair. He was shorter than I by an inch or two, but in girth he was about the same. I looked out of the window. The sky was dull, but no more snow had fallen. The car stood where Ivan had left it, in the empty street. I couldn't remember whether he'd taken the ignition key out. I tiptoed across and felt in his pockets. After a moment, I found the key.

I hesitated. If one of the sleepers woke and caught me in the act of swapping my clothes for Ivan's, that would be it. But once I was away, they'd have neither transport to pursue me nor telephone to report me—and I'd have gained hours.

With stealthy care, and a watchful eye on Ivan, I put on his trousers and tunic. The trouser legs were short, but when the bottoms were tucked into my *valinki* no-one would know. I crept back to the stove and transferred my few belongings—money, passport, and torch—from *shuba* to tunic. Sasha sighed and stirred, and I stood rooted, but he seemed to doze off again. I pulled on my *valinki*, which had dried overnight, rammed Ivan's ancient hat on my head, and moved silently to the door. This was the moment of greatest danger. Sasha was stirring again. Any second now he'd be opening his eyes. I lifted the door curtain a little and, as carefully as I could, tried to raise the iron latch. At first it wouldn't move. Then,

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as I pressed harder, it shot up with a loud metallic click. Sasha turned over towards me, awake.

I went quickly through the double doors and raced for the car. The street was still empty, the hamlet sleeping. I flung myself into the driving seat, thrust the ignition key into the lock, and pressed the starter. For seconds that seemed an eternity it whirred without effect. Then the engine roared. I engaged a gear, shot back a yard, tried another, did a wide U-turn, and was off. The last thing I saw, through the mirror, was Sasha at the door of the *izba,* gesticulating in his underclothes. I don't suppose he'll ever forgive me for so abusing his wonderful hospitality.

My spirits rose sharply. The car was running well. The petrol tank had nearly fifteen litres in it—more than enough to get me to Krasnaya Tserkov. The mirror, when I swivelled it towards me, showed a face I hardly recognised under its two days' growth of beard. With my drab tunic and trousers, my battered *valinki* and my tatty hat, I wouldn't have much difficulty in passing for a Ukrainian *kolkhoznik*—as long as I kept my mouth shut. If I had to talk, I could probably get by as a peasant from farther north. Things were looking up.

The car chains took care of the patches of soft snow. I reached the main road without mishap and swung right in the direction of Krasnaya Tserkov, driving now as fast as the bumpy corduroy would allow. I met two lorries and one car, but their drivers passed me without showing any interest. Nothing overtook me. After I'd covered about twelve kilometres I raised the gilded dome of a church, ahead and a little to the left. That must be the one I'd seen from Krasnaya Tserkov station. Presently the road divided. There was no signpost, but the left fork obviously led to the village. I took the other. There was no embankment to mark the line of the railway but I spotted a signal in the distance and then the building of Krasnaya Tserkov station.

I couldn't risk driving up to it—that would be a sure way of attracting unwelcome attention to myself. So I simply drove the car off the road into a drift, and covered the remaining mile or so as fast as my *valinki* would carry me, slowing down only when I neared the station. There were people about—and I'd never known a genuine *kolkhoznik* to hurry.

Outside the waiting room, the market women were already setting out their wares. I was very conscious of having no luggage, not even a small bundle, and this seemed the moment

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to acquire some convincing impedimenta. In dour silence, I paid for bread, sausage, cheese, and mineral water, stuffing my pockets. I also took a very large, solid cabbage, which I hoped would give me the authentic peasant touch. Clasping it tightly under my arm, I stumped into the waiting room. There were about a dozen people there, all dressed much as I was, and certainly looking no scruffier. They were sitting on the floor round a stove, in the usual patient attitudes. An inner office was firmly shut, and there was no sign of any official around.

The first thing was to find out what everyone was waiting for. I studied the faces about me, and finally picked on an old peasant with bright, rather crafty eyes who was sitting a little apart from the others. He said the next train was due at ten o'clock—it was now a little after nine—and that it would be going south. He was going to Odessa. He thought there would be a train for Moscow in the late afternoon. He asked me where I was from, and I said Tula. He looked at me a bit curiously, but he didn't ask any more questions.

I drifted away, disappointed and worried. It seemed more than likely that by the afternoon Authority would have descended on the station. The railway was an obvious escape route to close. Yet lightning speed was not a Russian characteristic—sputniks apart. I *might* be lucky—and Moscow was the only place where I'd be safe . . . I'd have to do something about a ticket—a problem I'd had on my mind. Tickets weren't normally sold at stations, and were always hard to come by. Travellers who boarded trains without them were put off at the next stop, and for me, that could be a disaster. At a pinch, I would have to try to bribe the *provodnik* on the Moscow train—but only as a last resort. People looking as I looked weren't usually in a position to bribe anyone.

I went out on to the platform, away from potentially curious eyes. Ten o'clock came and went and there was still no sign of the Odessa train. It was actually signalled at ten forty-five, and it showed as a puff of smoke in the distance a quarter of an hour later. The people in the waiting room began to emerge. My uneasiness grew, for it seemed that, to a man, they were all travelling south. Soon I'd be alone—conspicuously alone. I thought I'd do better to leave the station for a while. The trouble was that I'd nowhere to go to—and aimless walking might attract as much attention as sitting in the waiting room. Of course, there was still Ivan's car . . . I glanced back along the road to where I'd ditched the Moskvitch. To my consternation, I saw that a second car had

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pulled up beside it. Three men were inspecting its interior. It looked as though Authority was about to arrive.

I had to act fast—and I did. The Odessa train was steaming in. I rushed up to the old peasant I'd spoken to. "Sell me your ticket to Odessa," I said. "I'll give you fifty roubles." I showed him the money. He gaped at me. His ticket had cost him ten. "I *must* get this train," I said—as though my urgency could possibly matter to him. "A *hundred* roubles. You can always travel tomorrow."

He didn't speak—he just stared. Then, with a furtive glance to right and left, he closed his fist over the notes and gave me his ticket. I checked the number of the coach, which was seven; found it between numbers four and thirteen; showed the ticket to the *provodnik*, and climbed aboard.

The old man was still standing on the platform, gazing down at his riches, as the train left. Authority—roaring up to the station—would no doubt question him about who had got on the train, and in the end he'd tell what had happened. But I didn't think he'd do it right away, because by selling his ticket for more than its face value he'd committed an offence. And he wouldn't want to lose that hundred roubles if he could help it.

The coach was a "hard" one, open from end to end and totally devoid of privacy or comfort. Its accommodation consisted of some twenty varnished wooden shelves in two tiers. At night each shelf would have been occupied by a single passenger, by day people were allowed to crowd in. They were sitting up on the lower shelves with their children, bundles, and animals around them. A few still lay stretched out on the top deck—their feet, bound in filthy rags, protruding into the passageway at nose level. The smell in the carriage was noisome, the heat stifling. The crying of babies, clucking of hens, and high-pitched chatter of the Ukrainian peasant women made the place a bedlam.

There were frequent stops during the morning—and each one caused me anxiety. I expected a waiting posse and a search of the train. But station after station passed without incident. People alighted, others came aboard. Passengers descended with kettles and jugs to get boiling water for their tea from the buffets, and buy eggs and cucumbers from the squatting market women. Occasionally I descended too, keeping a wary eye open for any unusual knot of police or sign of special activity. But nothing happened.

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Slowly, the day wore on. It was, I reckoned, some three hundred miles from Krasnaya Tserkov to Odessa, and at this rate we wouldn't be in till the next morning. Then, around three in the afternoon, the character of the train seemed to change. It began to go faster, and there were no more stops. The passengers had thinned out at a junction called Novo Ukrainka and the air in the coach had improved. Someone said there'd be no more stops before Odessa. It was the best news I'd heard that day. I sat down by a window and tried to think what I'd do when I got there.

Dusk fell, and dim yellow lights came on in the carriage. It was just possible to make out a neighbour's face—though the effort hardly seemed worth while. Presently the *provodnik* got a samovar going in his little cubby hole and I joined the queue for a glass of pale, sugarless tea. A man started to talk to me, asking where I was from and what the weather was like in my part of the country. I answered briefly, and left him as soon as I could. Normally I'd have been eager to talk, and hear things I could never learn in Moscow, but this was no moment to broaden the mind. I went back to my window seat, ate bread and sausage, and thought about Marya Raczinski.

The first lights of Odessa's outer suburbs came into view shortly after nine o'clock. At once there was a stir in the carriage. People started to pack up, and put on outdoor clothes. The train went on, slowly now, clattering over points, switching tracks. I clapped Ivan's hat on my head, picked up my cabbage, and moved towards the door. Suddenly the train stopped with a jerk.

We stood for nearly half an hour; then crept on for a hundred yards and stopped again. The passengers began to grumble. The *provodnik* opened the coach door and stuck his head out. So did I. I could hear voices along the line. Men with torches were approaching. As they emerged from the darkness I saw that they had blue-topped, military-type caps. I knew then that my old peasant at Krasnaya Tserkov had been finally broken down. Unless I could leave the train, this looked like the end.

I walked quickly back to a small compartment, set aside for heavy luggage, near the outer door of the coach, and peered through the windows of the exit doors, first on one side and then on the other. Blue-caps were already stationed beneath each of them. I tried the connecting door to the next coach; it was unlocked. I went through and on, edging past people, excusing myself, trying not to appear in a hurry. At each

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exit door I came to, there was a guard on the line. It looked as though the whole train was surrounded. I tried one more coach—a "soft" one—and hastily drew back. Two blue-caps were standing in the corridor, blocking the way. They were examining papers. In Russia everyone had to have papers—I turned and retraced my steps. Perhaps I'd be luckier in the front of the train. But as I re-entered my own coach I ran into more blue-caps.

The search had evidently started at both ends of the train simultaneously. The male passengers were all queued up and a man with a shaved head and a fat neck was going slowly through their documents. A sharp voice called to me to get into line, and I did so. My brain felt numbed. It was like waiting for the tumbril, standing there.

The queue moved on. The light was so bad that Shaved Head was having to use a torch to see by. The time he spent on each passenger varied. The very old and the young were quickly dismissed. Two youths in front of me were passed through with only a perfunctory glance—and suddenly I was at the head of the queue.

The shaved man thrust out his hand. "*Dokumenti*, comrade." I loved that "comrade." He shone his torch at me and gave me a long, hard look. Already I thought I could read suspicion in his face. No doubt he was working to a description. I clapped my hand to the breast pocket of my tunic, as though feeling for my papers. I'd have to say I'd lost them—not that it would gain me anything, except a short respite. Then I felt something stiff in the quilting. I eased the contents out. Documents. Ivan's documents. I handed them over.

Shaved Head shone his torch on Ivan's passport, then again on me. "A poor likeness," he said.

I forced a grin, fingering my growth of beard. "One cleans oneself up for a photograph, comrade."

He looked me up and down. "You seem taller than 1 metre 68."

"Well, that's my height," I said. "In bare feet, of course. No doubt the *valinki* give me a few extra centimetres."

"Where do you work? "

"At the Kolkhoz Mikoyan, near Negoreloye. I'm a mechanic in the winter, a tractor driver in the summer."

"What are you doing in Odessa? "

"I'm on *komandirovka*," I said. "A conference on spare parts."

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" Where are your travel papers? "

" I'm afraid I left them behind," I said. " I was in a hurry."

He looked grim. " Where is your luggage?"

I jerked my thumb towards the luggage compartment.

" Get it," he said.

I shrugged, and walked through the coach to the luggage section and past it to the doors. The blue-caps were still on guard. I was so desperate now that, given half a chance, I'd have tried to make a break for it. But the nearest guard was standing less than ten feet away. He looked hefty, and he had a gun holster at his side with the flap open. A little beyond him there was another guard. It was hopeless. I'd just have to go back and face the music.

As I turned, I caught the rumble of an approaching train. It came by slowly on the next track, blowing its whistle to clear the line. A goods train, drawing trucks, mostly empty... I opened the carriage door. The blue-cap was standing back to let the goods train pass. He glanced up as the door opened, shouted at me, and snatched the gun from his holster. I could see an empty truck approaching. I had no weapon—except my cabbage. But that was enough. I hurled it at him. It caught him clean between the eyes and he stumbled backward. The empty truck drew level—and I jumped.

I landed with a thud in the bottom, rolled over, and hit the side of the truck hard. The train rumbled on. Above the sound of the wheels, I could hear a crescendo of shouting voices. I caught the hiss and heat of the passenger locomotive as my truck went by. The goods train was drawing away. I crouched down in the darkness, praying that it would put on speed. Instead, a hundred yards on, it clanked to a stop. Behind me, I could hear pounding feet. The whole pack was after me now—the truck had become a trap.

I jumped down, and raced away right across the multiple tracks. Someone blew a blast on a whistle. A voice cried, " There he is!" The pursuit was close—I came to an iron fence and turned along it. Fifty yards on I found a gap, shot through it, crossed some kind of yard, climbed a low wall, and found myself in a dark, deserted street.

I turned to the left, running now at full speed. I could hear the blue-caps, still on my tail, shouting and blowing their whistles. Suddenly the street came to an end. Ahead was what looked like a stretch of waste ground. I stumbled on, fighting for breath, soaked in sweat. There was a lot of rubbish on the ground, that I kept tripping over. I couldn't

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keep up the pace much longer. Then, without warning, the earth seemed to give way beneath me. I felt myself slithering, falling. There was a blinding flash in my head—and I lost touch with the world.

I CAME round in pitch darkness. I was lying in a crumpled heap on a hard, cold surface. My head ached, but my mind was clear. I remembered falling—and I remembered the chase. The chase! I lay listening. There wasn't a sound of any kind. Wherever I was, the hunt was somewhere else.

I moved my arms and legs and felt experimentally around my body. I was bruised and sore but I didn't seem to have broken any bones. I groped for my torch and clicked it on. I could hardly believe what I saw.

I was lying at the bottom of a narrow shaft—a slide, not quite perpendicular, of loose earth. To left and right, a tunnel stretched away into the darkness. It was five or six feet wide and a little over six feet high. The sides were of some kind of sandstone, smooth and straight as though they'd been carefully worked. On the wall was a slogan in rough black letters: *Death to the German Invader!*

I looked at my watch. The time was only ten thirty-five. I couldn't have been out for very long.

I peered up the shaft. At the top I could see one bright star. It was hard to judge how far away the surface was, but I didn't think I'd have any difficulty in climbing out.

I set off to explore the tunnel. After a few yards, it forked. I took the right fork. Almost at once it divided again. The place was a labyrinth—and I lacked an Ariadne. I went on slowly, bearing always to the right, so that I'd have no trouble getting back. The air was fresh, the tunnel remarkably dry. I guessed it had been hewn out to provide building material. I seemed to have read that Odessa was built of sandstone.

The way was strewn with relics of earlier occupation. There were battered cooking utensils, discarded weapons, and grislier relics, too—several incomplete skeletons. In places the walls were black with signatures, dates and slogans. These catacombs must have been the hiding place of revolutionaries and resistance fighters. They were still used by the adventurous young of Odessa. In a small chamber I found the cardboard ends of cigarettes, a candle, and a boys' comic. I pocketed the candle, and made my way back to the shaft.

With the torch switched off to save the battery, I sat down

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and considered my situation. I had, for the moment at any rate, a safer base than any I was likely to find up in the town. I had enough food for at least two days and a bottle of mineral water that had miraculously survived my falls. I had quilted clothes to keep me warm. So why make any move? Above ground, the security squads would be combing the city for me. Whatever I decided to do next, I'd be wiser to wait till the heat was off. I got out my bread and cheese and sausage and settled down to a leisurely meal.

There was nothing to do in the darkness—and I started to think about Korzhenko. *Why* had the Russians wanted to kill me? What had I done? Of course, I'd broken a few unwritten rules by pumping the witness Skaliga on his own and going off secretly to snoop in Lvov. But the only result had been to confirm what the Russians themselves had said. It just didn't make sense . . . Very soon I abandoned the problem and thankfully drifted off to sleep . . .

It was the onset of daylight that roused me—a pale streak coming down the shaft. I got stiffly to my feet, and looked up. The tunnel was nearer the surface than I'd supposed. It would take only seconds to scramble up that sloping shaft.

My complacency was shattered by the sound of voices above. I listened tensely. It could be ordinary passers-by—though that derelict piece of ground I'd stumbled over hadn't looked much of a thoroughfare. The voices grew louder. I caught the crunch of heavy boots. The footsteps stopped at the hole. I knew then that the view I'd taken of my prospects the night before had been too hopeful. The blue-caps had come back to the place where they'd lost me.

A voice said, "If he is down there, *tovarischi,* we'll have a job to find him."

"You're right," a second voice said. "I had an uncle who lived in these quarries for more than a year when the Germans were here. Every night he and his partisans used to come up and kill a Fritz or two and steal more weapons. The Germans tried everything, but they lost so many of the men they sent in that in the end they gave up. It's a real warren—the one bit of Odessa they never captured."

"We'd better take a look, anyway. Down you go, Yuri."

I rammed my few belongings into my pockets, and retreated along the section of tunnel I'd explored the night before. After the first fork, I stopped to listen again. The blue-caps were slithering down the chute. They'd got torches—big ones, judging by the glow. I heard one of them say, "Look—

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valinki!" He'd found an impression left by my feet in the debris. They knew, now, I was in the tunnel. I still waited. I didn't want to commit myself to the unknown labyrinth unless I had to.

At once, swift footfalls advanced in my direction and a powerful beam of light. I'd left it late. I turned and ran, holding my puny torch in front of me. The blue-cap must have heard me, for his steps quickened. He was almost on my heels. I feared a shot, raced through the chamber where I'd found the candle, and kept going, not bothering now about which forks I took. Little by little I began to gain. Then, quite suddenly, the noise behind me faded, the footfalls died away. The blue-cap had taken a different turning.... The silence was total.

I leaned against the wall, breathing hard. I'd no idea where I was—or what to do. I doubted if I could find my way back to the shaft, except by luck—and anyway the blue-caps were there. I'd do better to go on, and hope for another way out. My torch battery was beginning to fail, but I still had the candle. I lit it, and set off again, slowly, taking alternate forks, so that I wouldn't walk in a circle.

That quarry was a fantastic place. The tunnels, like the veins of a giant leaf, pushed out in all directions, apparently for miles under the city itself as well as the empty outskirts, for in places the roof had been strengthened with steel props and concrete, as though to take the weight of buildings. Once I thought I heard the rumble of traffic above me. Repeatedly I had to negotiate pipes and cables that crossed the tunnel. I kept going, hoping all the time for an opening. My situation was desperate. Soon I'd be walking blind. The maze itself had become more dangerous than the blue-caps. I walked for five or ten minutes without finding any trace of an exit. Then a puff of air caught the candle flame and it went out.

I couldn't see a thing, but I could feel a slight draught against my face. Then, as my eyes adjusted themselves, I became aware of a faint light ahead. A white, natural light. I went quickly towards it. To my intense relief, I found that it came from another shaft, very similar to the first. Twenty yards ahead there were two more shafts, close together—and beyond them another glimmer of light. Outside the city there were evidently a lot of narrow exits. I imagined the partisans had made them. Or the Germans.

I stopped at the bottom of one of the shafts, trying to decide the best thing to do. Now that the blue-caps knew I was

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down here they'd be certain to extend the search and station men at each exit. I'd better get out—and fast . . .

I climbed the shaft and listened carefully for a few moments, then cautiously raised my head above the surface. The first thing I saw was a goalpost. I was at the edge of a sports field, with what looked like a factory at the far end. There was no one about. That was one hazard behind me, anyway—I scrambled out. At once, though, a new hazard faced me. The ground was completely bare. And here was I, wearing huge felt *valinki* specially designed for snow. I wondered how many other people in Odessa were wearing them. It wasn't a good start.

I plodded along the edge of the field till I came to a gate, and went through. I was on the outskirts of the town. Presently I came to a made-up road with new blocks of flats on either side. There were quite a lot of people about now. Some had quilted clothes but none wore *valinki*. One or two gave me odd looks. A militiaman, with a cigarette dangling from his lips, watched me as I shuffled by. I felt the sweat running down my spine. It wouldn't be long before someone asked for my papers.

I trudged on. I was beginning to get into the town now. There were busy crowds to give some cover to my *valinki*. At the corner of a square, I spotted two blue-caps bearing down on me. There was a reading-stand close by, with a glass-covered frame displaying copies of the day's papers, and several people looking at them. I wedged myself in among them and pretended to be reading *Pravda*. I learned nothing from it, except that the date was December 25th. When I looked round, the blue-caps had gone, and I set off again.

At a road junction a lively market was selling everything from coloured drinks to furniture. I stopped and gulped down a bottle of mineral water. At least I needn't be thirsty when I was caught. Then I noticed a second-hand clothes stall—with shoes on it. I sidled up and turned over a few pairs, looking for the oldest that would fit me. The shawled woman in charge glanced at my feet. "You've come a long way, *dyadya*," she said. I nodded. "From Poltava. It's cold up there." I picked out an ancient black pair that looked right, and tried them on, not hurrying. They felt fine. The only trouble now was the gap between the bottom of Ivan's trousers and the top of my shoes. I pushed the trousers down as far as I could without actually shedding them. I'd probably get by—I looked like a scarecrow, anyway.

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I haggled over the price of the shoes for appearance's sake, paid with a crumpled note, took my change, and went off with the *valinki* under my arm. Beside another stall, I put them on the ground while I fingered some material. Then, making sure that no one was watching me, I pushed them well out of sight among the debris under the stall and walked away.

I could now pass safely in the street—but that wouldn't help me for more than a few hours. Without credentials, I wouldn't be able to seek a bed that night—and once darkness fell, some militiaman would be sure to ask for my documents. What I needed now, and urgently, was that ticket to Moscow.

A large cash payment seemed the only hope. Speculators sometimes hung around the big railway stations offering tickets they'd queued for.

I inquired the way to the main station. I was advised to make for the State Bank and then go straight down Pushkin Street, which would bring me out at the Square of the October Revolution and the station building. I set off southwards at a steady pace. The route was easy to follow, for the centre of the town was laid out in symmetrical blocks. I quickly found Pushkinskaya, a fine, tree-lined thoroughfare, and in fifteen minutes I reached the square.

One glance at the station building told me it was no place for me. Blue-caps were at all the entrances, checking documents. I was too late. Even if I could get hold of a ticket, I wouldn't be able to use it.

I turned away, unutterably depressed and weary. At the sight of those blue-caps a terrible lassitude had suddenly come over me. I'd no idea what to do now—I was close to giving up. If they were watching the stations, they'd obviously be watching everything—the airfield, the port, the exit roads. I was trapped in the town and I'd never get out . . .

I drifted off, no longer interested in where I was going. After a while I came to a park—Shevchenko Park, the notice said. It was high and hilly, and dotted with ancient ruins. There was an observatory at the top, and a pavilion restaurant. I was extremely hungry—I hadn't had a proper meal since Sasha had fed me. I climbed the hill to the restaurant. It was almost empty. I went in and sat down under the window. I ordered a chop, fried potatoes and a bottle of beer. Momentarily I'd forgotten what I looked like. I offered a note, a small one but sufficient.

There was a fine view from the window—over the harbour

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and out to sea, almost like an aerial view. I could see the layout of the quays and moles and breakwaters; I could see the ships in port. There was a biggish one, with a flag that I thought was Canadian, moving out to make room for another coming in. So near . . . and yet so far. I watched it manœuvre across the harbour, let go its anchor, and tie up by the stern to a buoy. I watched enviously as a boatload of its crew puf off for the shore. Free men!

The food put fresh heart into me. I no longer felt like giving up. Moscow might be unattainable—but there must be many minor, unwatched roads. The weather was mild, and the terrain not harsh like the steppe. I could sleep in the open. It was worth a try.

There was food on sale at the counter, and I restuffed my pockets with sausage, chocolate, and mineral water. I also bought, for a few kopecks, a tourist's plan of Odessa.

On a bench outside the restaurant, I sat and studied it. Along the north-eastern side of the town, the harbour and docks with their attendant railway lines appeared to stretch for the best part of two miles. That way there'd be vigilant police. To the south, the coastal strip was quite different. The plan showed it as conserved woodland fronting the sea. There was a place called Lansheron about a mile or so along from where I was. The plan described it as a bathing station. That sounded more my mark. By keeping to the beach, I might be able to outflank the police cordon.

I took a path that dropped steeply, and soon emerged on the coastal road. It was more built-up than the plan had indicated, mainly with sanatoria and workers' holiday homes. After a few hundred yards the solid buildings petered out, giving way to beach huts along the shore. This was one of Odessa's summer playgrounds. It was deserted—too deserted for my peace of mind. If anyone saw me, what was I supposed to be doing there? I found the answer in the shape of a small sack, washed up by the sea. I started to fill it with bits of wood as I walked along. Now I made sense.

I kept close to the shelter of the trees, not hurrying. The water was placid, with only the gentlest lap of wavelets at the sandy edge. I passed several small rowing boats, laid up. A little farther on there was a wooden shack, with nautical equipment visible through the windows. I could see rope, lifejackets, rowlocks, oars.

I stopped. Oars! I looked back to where the little boats lay—and beyond to the granite wall of the harbour. Above it,

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I could just see the funnel of the Canadian ship... It was crazy, of course, absolutely crazy. But wasn't everything I was doing crazy? Looking at those oars, I had an overpowering urge to put everything to one single test.

By the time dusk approached, I'd made up my mind.

The door of the shack was padlocked, so I broke a window with a piece of driftwood, and climbed in. I chose a pair of oars with rowlocks tied to them, gathered up some oily rags, and climbed out again. I walked back quickly to a rowing boat I'd picked out in daylight. It was the best of the bunch. I dragged the boat down the beach, muffled the oars with the rags, and pulled away from the shore.

There was no tide under me, and there was no wind. The evening was dark—though not as dark as I'd hoped. I'd overlooked the glow from the city. I wondered what else I'd overlooked. The oars creaked a bit, in spite of the rags, and at first some water seeped into the boat through the dried-up planks and I had to bail with the only bailer I'd got—Ivan's fur hat.

I knew from the plan just where I was making for. There was a mole, nearly a mile long, shaped like a shallow S and protecting the harbour from the east. It had a tower with a flashing white light. I didn't know whether the tower was manned. If it wasn't, I'd have no difficulty in slipping round the end of the mole and into the harbour through a wide entrance between the mole and a long straight breakwater. The steamer was anchored not far inside. Above the mole I could see its masthead light.

I pulled steadily. I'd taken off my padded jacket, but it was hot work.

In nearly an hour I reached the end of the mole. I turned frequently, anxiously examining the tower. It was a full-sized lighthouse with a gallery, almost certainly manned. I rowed for the shadow of the wall, expecting a hail at any moment, but none came. When I was right under the tower, I laid the oars gently across the thwarts and paddled with my hands. The faint onshore breeze helped me along. I crept past the end of the mole and on into the harbour. In a few minutes I was out of danger.

The steamer was now in full view, its lights blazing. It was about a quarter of a mile away, and stern-on to me. I could see a launch, tied up at the foot of the gangway on the port side, and several men with flat caps at the rail. Authority,

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without a doubt. Checking all arrivals, until the steamer sailed. Well, I'd expected that.

I steered well out until I was past the buoy. Then I approached it from the starboard quarter of the ship, which gave me cover. I was afraid that when I reached it I'd be in the launch's line of sight, but I wasn't—the bulge of the ship's stern was in the way. The buoy was a round, flat object, with an enormous iron hook in the centre. A warp, almost as thick as my wrist, was looped over it. From the buoy, the rope swept up in a graceful curve to the stern of the ship, entering at deck level. There seemed to be no strain on it. I could only guess its length—perhaps eighty feet. After the first inspection I preferred not to look at it.

I made the dinghy fast, put on my jacket, and climbed out on to the buoy. For a moment, I debated. If I left the boat tied up, it would be found by whoever came to cast off the warp. That could be fatal. If I set it adrift, I'd be finally committed to my enterprise—there'd be no going back. And an empty boat floating round the harbour could be almost as dangerous as one tied up—if it were seen. But it might not be seen for some time. Letting it go seemed the lesser risk. I untied the painter, and it drifted away. Then I remembered Ivan's hat was in the bottom. . .

I turned to the warp. I was scared to death. I gripped the rope in both hands and pushed myself clear of the buoy. My feet dipped into the water. I worked myself along till they were free—and went on. Slowly. A little at a time, I told myself—that was the way. Take it easy . . . I covered a couple of yards without difficulty. The rope was still almost horizontal. But as soon as it began to curve up I was in trouble. Every time I moved along, my weight came almost entirely on one arm. I'd never do it that way.

I swung my legs up and gripped the warp between my feet. Now I had my back to the steamer. I moved my hands along behind me and drew up my feet. That was better. The weight was more evenly spread, the pull on my arms much less. And now I could shove myself up with my feet. As the curve steepened, they took more and more of the strain. I kept going, a few inches at a time. I struggled on. The angle grew sharper. The muscles of my arms felt as though they were coming apart. I wasn't trained for these acrobatics. I began to doubt if I'd make it. Yet there couldn't be much farther to go. My position on the warp was almost vertical. I pushed with my feet, my head touched something hard.

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I looked up, and back. I could see a rail, a foot above my head. The sight of it gave me new strength. One supreme effort, and I'd be there. I wound my legs round the rope and gave a desperate heave—and I was straddled over it, facing the ship. I reached for the rail, hauled myself up, reached for the next rail, got both feet on the bit of deck where the rope ran through, and climbed over. I'd made it!

I stood there, soaked with sweat and trembling from excitement and exertion. I couldn't risk showing myself yet—there were sure to be Russians aboard. The afterdeck was empty, but it might not stay that way. I crossed to an iron ladder and climbed to the next deck. Lifeboats . . . The classic hideout for any stowaway. I took a closer look at one of them. Well, I didn't have to get *inside* the boat. I climbed the davits and hauled myself up on to the tarpaulin cover. It had a sag in the middle, and when I lay down flat I was pretty sure I wouldn't be visible from the deck. Apart from the fact that I was lying in a pool of water, everything was fine.

The next few hours were as tense as any I'd lived through. I knew nothing of the ship's timetable. She might be scheduled to lie at the buoy for a couple of days. She might be going back to the wharf to take on cargo. If she stayed around long, the chances were that my rowing boat would be found and a search started before I'd got clear. I lay listening, trying to interpret the sounds of the ship. I could hear the faint throb of an engine somewhere below. That seemed a good sign. I could hear voices—some of them Russian. Once I heard loud laughter and the clink of glasses. A farewell toast, perhaps.

Then, startlingly close, the ship's siren blasted off. I heard someone call out an order, in a heartening North American accent. A whistle blew. An engine roared on the other side of the ship. That must be the launch leaving. The ship's telegraph rang and I felt vibration. We were moving. But only for a moment.

The whistle went again, in the ship's stern. I guessed the warp was being cast off at the buoy. There was a hiss of steam and a rumbling noise from the afterdeck as it was hauled in. The ship's telegraph rang and there was more vibration. Another stop. A deeper rumbling. That was the anchor coming up. More whistles. Now the telegraph was clanging every few seconds. The ship was manœuvring. Then the throb below grew stronger. Cool air began to blow over my

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body. A flashing white light threw its glow over me. We were passing the end of the mole. We were sailing . . .

I longed to show myself, but I didn't dare. The Russians claimed twelve miles of territorial waters. For all I knew there was a pilot aboard who'd be taken off later. We might be accompanied. We could easily be pursued. That drifting rowing boat still worried me.

The ship steamed steadily on. Its engines seemed to be going full ahead. I peered cautiously over the side of the lifeboat. To starboard, at least, there was no other vessel in sight. It seemed safe to reconnoitre. I heaved myself up. I was in a shocking state. My hair and beard were matted with salt, my eyes were sore, my padded clothes were sodden and covered with black slime from the buoy. Every joint in my body ached. I had to use the greatest care in climbing down from the davits.

Back on the boat deck I took another quick look round at the sea. There were no lights anywhere except our own. Just a beautiful emptiness. I descended to the afterdeck. Two sailors were swabbing down. One of them looked up at the sound of my step—and his jaw dropped.

For a moment he just stared. Then he called to his mate. " Hi, Joe, look at this—we gotta Russki stowaway . . ."

The captain was a big, tough, weatherbeaten man from the shores of the St. Lawrence. His name was Nelson—and to me he was a greater man than Horatio. Once I'd told him who I was and he'd looked at my passport and heard an outline of my story, he got straight down to a salvage operation. He gave me a stiff shot of bourbon, let me use his bath, lent me a razor, looked out a suit of his own shore clothes, and regaled me with turkey and Christmas pudding. He was magnificent.

Over dinner I gave him a full account of all that had happened to me. He listened with a kind of fascinated incredulity.

" Well," he said, as I finished, " you sure have had an adventure." He sat back. " The thing is, what the heck are we going to do with you now? "

" Where are you making for? " I asked him.

" Halifax, Nova Scotia. We'll be there in about two weeks. I guess you're anxious to get back to England." He pondered. " I could put you ashore at Istanbul tomorrow evening. You could fly back from there."

" That would be fine," I said. " I'd be most grateful."

" Got any money? *Real* money? "

" Enough to cable the office. They'll take care of me."

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He nodded. "That's okay, then. Now I reckon you'd like an early night." His eyes were fixed on me, a bit incredulous —and a bit speculative. "Those Russkis must have had a mighty strong reason for wanting to bump you off, Quainton. You sure you've no idea what it was? "

"I haven't a clue," I said.

It was true—I *hadn't* a clue—and I was much too worn out to start thinking about it again that night.

Next morning, things were different. Refreshed and alert after a wonderful sleep, and no longer preoccupied by danger, I felt capable at last of logical reasoning. So I began all over again, with the old question. *What had I done?*

Clearly, the offence I'd committed had been no minor one. They'd never have tried to kill me if I hadn't been, in some way, a serious danger to them. A danger that couldn't be removed by any other means.

I thought back over my Raczinski inquiries. Nothing there for the Russians to object to. I'd planned to go to England for a showdown. If it hadn't been for the trip, I'd be in England now—and the Russian charge might have been substantiated.

If it hadn't been for the trip... Suddenly, I found myself wondering. It had been pretty remarkable, the way Pavlov had laid on that trip with such lightning speed, a matter of hours before my departure. And pressured me into going on it. Could it be that for some reason the Russians hadn't *wanted* me to get the whole truth from Raczinski?

I thought back to Raczinski's story—its weaknesses and its gaps... The fact that he'd given Lvov as his invented birthplace—Lvov, that had been Russian since the war, and was therefore virtually closed to outside inquiries.

I still had no clear picture of the truth. What I had was a most appalling suspicion...

We were through the Bosphorus and abreast of Istanbul by eight that evening. I thanked Captain Nelson in warmest terms for the hospitality he'd shown me, pledged the return of his clothes from London, and was taken ashore.

As I'd arrived from Russia in an unscheduled ship, without a Soviet exit visa, the Turkish immigration officials were understandably curious and I had to tell them more than I really wanted to. They were pretty disbelieving, but I finally convinced them that I was neither a liar nor a lunatic and they gave me a forty-eight-hour transit visa.

I telephoned the office, and managed to get hold of the

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Foreign editor. I told him I was on my way home, that I'd explain everything when I arrived, and that I had to have two hundred pounds next day. Somehow, he fixed it.

After a quiet night in a comfortable hotel, I collected the money at the National Bank that afternoon, did some basic shopping, and bought a ticket for London on an overnight plane. I took a taxi to the airport at midnight, and an hour later I was airborne.

I could hardly wait now to get home. There was one simple, practical check I wanted to make before I faced Raczinski. If he really was making cosmetics at Welwyn, it could only mean that I was on the wrong track and that my suspicions were baseless.

I reached London Airport around nine in the morning, sent off a telegram to the office saying I'd be in touch with them later, and after breakfast, hired a self-drive car and drove round the North Circular to Welwyn. I stopped in the town and asked the way to Floria Products. It was a couple of miles away.

In a few minutes I was there. A big black-and-white signboard beside the gate said: *Floria Products, Ltd. Research Unit.* The laboratory was set back about fifty yards, at the end of a concrete drive. It stood on its own, in surroundings of thick woodland.

I drove back half a mile to a lay-by, found a gap in the hedge and plunged into the woods. I pressed on for about a quarter of a mile, working round in the general direction of the lab, and came out into an open space. Beyond it was a wire fence of strong mesh, about ten feet high, with several strands of barbed wire running along the top. It was flanked by a wide, cleared area, like a firebreak.

I crossed the clearing and went up to the fence. Suddenly, a dog barked... A moment later a man appeared, leading an Alsatian.

"What are you supposed to be doing?" he demanded, coming close to the fence.

"Just taking a walk," I said.

He gave me a long, hard look. "Well, you'd better take a walk back where you came from. All this is private property."

"Out here, too?"

"Yes, it all belongs to Floria Products. Come on, get moving."

I got moving. I'd found out all I wanted to know—*more*

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than I wanted to know. Whatever was going on behind that high, well-guarded fence, I was pretty sure had nothing to do with cosmetics.

So there I was, with the shocking, ugly truth. Not all of it yet, but enough. Taken in conjunction with what had gone before, the logic was irresistible. Raczinski was a brilliant scientist. He'd appeared out of the chaos of post-war Europe with a background that no one could check on. He'd said he'd come from Poland, but that had been a lie. He'd worked his way up to a position of authority in a secret establishment. When I'd discovered things about him that might have started a new inquiry into his background, the Russians had tried to kill me. So what did it add up to? That for all these years, Raczinski had been working not for himself but for Russia. That Raczinski was a Soviet spy.

I wondered if Marya knew.

At that point, I wasn't at all sure that I ought to go on alone. If my conclusion was right, the stakes had become incalculable. Maybe this was the moment to hand over to the authorities . . . In the end I decided to drive straight to Hampstead. By suddenly showing up on Raczinski's doorstep when he thought I was in Moscow, I'd make the maximum impact—and there'd be no chance of his slipping away.

It was just after five when I reached his flat. Raczinski's car was at the kerb. There was a light in the top window, and I could see Marya's shadow on the curtain. I steeled myself for the encounter. I hated what I had to do, but things had gone too far for sentiment. I climbed the stairs, and rang.

Marya answered the door. I braced myself for her shock reaction as our eyes met—but it didn't come. No exclamation escaped her. Her face showed neither surprise nor welcome.

"Come in," she said, in a toneless voice. She looked pale and strained, with black smudges of tiredness round her eyes. The drama seemed to have started without me.

I went in, bewildered. "You were—expecting me?"

"Yes—some time."

I still didn't get it. "You know why I'm here, then?"

"I think so."

"I have to talk to your father, Marya."

She shook her head. "My father's dead," she said.

She turned away, into the sitting room. I stood for a moment, stunned by the news. Then I followed her.

"When was this, Marya?"

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" On Thursday."

" Were you here? "

" No, I was in Ireland, working. The police rang me, and I flew back yesterday."

" Who found him? "

" The police found him. He wrote to them before he killed himself. He took something . . . Some poison."

" Did he leave any message for you? "

" He left his life story." She went to a bureau and took out a foolscap envelope. " It concerns you, too. I'll leave you to read it." She went out, and I heard her bedroom door close.

The letter was dated, " Thursday afternoon."

My dear Marya,

The moment has come when I have to tell you the truth about myself, which I hoped always to keep from you.

I was not born in Lvov, as you believe, but in Leningrad. I was brought up as a second-generation Bolshevik, a disciplined and indoctrinated Marxist enthusiast. I studied science at the University of Leningrad and became a research chemist. I was considered a young man of outstanding ability and promise. I married your mother, also a Leningrader, shortly before the outbreak of World War II. I loved her dearly.

When war came to Russia I was required to go to Moscow to work on propellants, leaving her behind. Then the Germans reached the gates of Moscow and every man was needed in the line. I fought for two weeks, and was shot in the knee. After I had convalesced I was sent to Sverdlovsk to continue my work. Early in 1942 I had word from Leningrad that you had been born. Your mother was trapped in the dreadful siege of the city. For me, it was a time of unspeakable agony. I had to work, and—worse—to *eat*, knowing that her daily ration of food was a single fragment of bread, so small that it would be lost in the palm of a hand. Presently I heard she had died of starvation.

It was immediately after this that I was approached by Soviet Intelligence, with a proposition. I was told of a plan to infiltrate the West after victory with selected men of high scientific qualifications. I had no urge towards espionage, but it was represented to me that I could perform no greater patriotic service. By learning the secrets

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of the capitalist enemy, I would be helping to make Russia so strong that no one would ever dare to invade her again.

I was greatly influenced by being told that, if I agreed, my baby daughter would be brought out of dying Leningrad across the ice-road of Lake Ladoga to safety.

My tour of duty, I was told, would not exceed seven years after victory, and then I could return. You would still be young enough to re-adjust as a Russian girl. The pressure was great, and I allowed myself to be convinced.

My work in London was absorbing and important, but as the years went by, I began to grow anxious about you. You were growing up to be an English girl. In the sixth year, I reminded my contact of the undertaking I had been given about returning. He brought instructions from Moscow that I must stay on. I think this was the beginning of my disillusionment.

It was when I appeared to be in line for one of the commanding heights in my scientific field that someone in Soviet Intelligence had the idea of staging a trial and condemning me to a term of imprisonment as a camp criminal. The intention was to show Soviet hostility to me and so strengthen my anti-Soviet image. The two camp witnesses, Lutkin and Skaliga—were security men who had known me well in Moscow. The trial was quickly held, and sentence passed. The ruse seemed to work well. I got through screening without difficulty, and was appointed assistant director in a secret laboratory.

I passed some highly important information. At first, I hardly questioned the rightness of what I was doing. It seemed to be my duty. Then, as time went on, I became increasingly aware of inner conflict. Not only was I still worried about you, Marya, but I was coming to realise that freedom—western freedom—was more than an empty phrase. I felt morally bankrupt and desperate for peace of mind. What I could not face was involving you.

Then Tim came into your life—and into mine. I liked him, and I was happy for you.

When Tim went back to Moscow, I tried to help. I urged that if possible the Soviet authorities should reassure him about the trial by producing witnesses so unconvincing, he would be certain a mistake in identity had been made. In the case of Lutkin, this was done. Trouble came only when Tim interviewed Skaliga on his own; he described me, and my wound as he had seen it in Moscow.

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Tim's visit to Lvov uncovered the second mistake. When he said he was coming back to England to question me, the Russians knew that my days as an effective and important spy were numbered. There was only one way to maintain me in my key position—and that was to silence Tim. The Ukraine trip was hurriedly arranged.

This morning, when I went to a Hampstead meeting called by my contact, I learned Tim had made his escape in a Canadian ship, and that Soviet agents were keeping track of his movements. As soon as he reached London, there would be men available to deal with him—the stakes were so high that no risk would be considered too great. And I should be able to continue my work undisturbed.

That, Marya, is the situation confronting me as I sit here. The assassins are waiting for Tim. In the past hour, I have had to decide what to do. Writing this confession to you, has helped me to make up my mind. At first, I considered surrendering to the authorities. But I could not face the protracted humiliation for you—nor the thought of *seeing* you again, once you knew the truth. It seemed better that I should remove myself from the scene. In the end, for you as well as for me, it will be merciful.

I shall write some more letters now—one to the local police, enclosing the key of the flat, one to my contact, one to the Soviet Embassy. That will ensure that my body will be found in the morning, and that the Russians will *know* I am dead.

That is all, my dear. I will not attempt to excuse myself. I am deeply sorry that I have brought so much trouble upon you. What you do now, I cannot hope to influence. You will have to decide, you and Tim. I have left you, I know, a dreadful legacy—yet I would have done anything for your happiness.

Goodbye, Marya.

The signature, "Stefan Rashinsky," was spelt not in the Polish way, but as though transliterated from the Russian.

Moved and shaken, I put the letter down. So there it was—the whole truth about Marya's father. The facts I had known, and the facts I had not known. All in their place at last.

For Marya's sake, I would gladly have destroyed this letter—but I could not. The authorities had to know that Raczinski had passed secrets, if only to judge what had been lost.

I sat at Raczinski's desk and wrote a covering note to go with

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his letter. I sealed both in an envelope which I put into my wallet, knowing that it was my duty to take the envelope personally to Scotland Yard. It would be sent at once to the right people to deal with so vital a security matter. I was pretty certain they would call a conference of security brass in Whitehall. Probably I would have to go over the whole Raczinski story in detail and answer endless questions. Inevitably, there would be a big flap.

My thoughts were in a whirl, but one thought stood out sharp and clear. *Marya had known nothing . . .*

I called from the door, and presently she came in. Her face was without expression, a frozen mask concealing everything but weariness. I wished she'd talk, break down, curse—anything . . . I'd have tried to comfort her, but I knew she didn't want comfort from me. Whatever her father had done, the

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fact remained that I had been the instrument of his death. The gulf between us was impassable.

I concentrated on practical things. "This letter, Marya—it mentions a lot of things that you don't know about. Would you like me to explain them?"

"Not now. I don't want to hear anything more."

"Have the police seen the letter?"

"No. I thought you should see it first."

"It ought to go to someone now," I said. "Someone pretty high up. I'll take care of that... What about yourself, Marya? You've had a terrible shock—you need looking after. I wish I could help you. Isn't there anything I can do—anything at all?"

"Nothing at all," she said. "Please go now."

"Look," I said, "I know you're angry with me, and if you've decided you can't bear the sight of me any more, I suppose there's not much I can do. All the same, I'm going to say my piece... It's true that in a sense I brought this on you—if I hadn't been so damned persistent, nothing would have come out. And your father would still be alive. You could say I killed him... But once I'd started, I *had* to go on—one thing led to another. And I only started because I wanted to smooth things out between us."

Marya stirred uneasily. "I know that," she said.

"Well, doesn't that make any difference? Do you *have* to treat me like a murderer—like an untouchable?"

"You're quite wrong," she said, "I'm not angry with *you*."

I stared at her. "Then what's got into you? You're like a block of ice."

"It's how I feel. Numbed."

"Are you grieving so much for your father?"

"No—I'm not grieving..."

"Then what is it, Marya? Talk to me."

"All right," she said, in a low voice, "I will. I'll tell you just what I feel. I was fond of my father. I was grateful to him for the sacrifices he'd made for me. I admired him. I respected him. I thought he was a fine, brave man, who'd had a hideous time in camps and pulled through by sheer guts. And all those years, he was a cheat—a squalid, lying cheat. Dishonest, disloyal, double-faced. Every hour of every day, he deceived me. I'll never forgive him. He turned my life into a fraud. He made me as false as he was. I trusted him absolutely, I believed everything he said—and he lied and lied..." Tears gathered in her eyes. "How could he do it?

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How could he look me in the face, and smile, and joke—knowing all the time what he was doing? He didn't have to be a spy."

"No, he didn't—but he wanted to serve his country, and his beliefs. And that was the way he was asked to do it."

"Are you defending him?"

"I'm trying to be fair to him. Your father was working for all sorts of fine ideals, when he started. Peace, brotherhood, no more exploitation—or so he thought. In fact he was working for a tyranny—a monstrous tyranny that would have enslaved the world by now if it had been allowed to. You know it, and I know it. In the end, he knew it himself. Okay—so he was wrong. He chose the wrong side. But that doesn't make him despicable. It just makes him pitiful."

Marya shook her head. "I can't be so detached—or so forgiving."

"You must be, for your own sake."

"Think of the harm he did."

"He paid for it, with all he had. And he killed himself to protect me, when he could easily have sacrificed me. I don't think you have to be ashamed of him."

"I am ashamed—bitterly ashamed. And everyone else will be. His friends—my friends. I can't face them, Tim. I can't face anyone. I feel so—degraded. You know what it will be like."

"Yes—it'll be savage. But we'll survive . . ."

"We?"

"We'll get married. We'll face it together."

"Married—*now*! You must be out of your mind."

"Why shouldn't we? Give me one good reason."

"It's impossible. Just because you're sorry for me . . ."

I almost shouted at her. "I'm *not* bloody well sorry for you. If you want to know, I'm sorry for myself. I love you and I need you and I want to marry you. I've never stopped loving you, not for a second. I want you for my wife and I can't get you . . ."

"Tim, it wouldn't work. Not after what's happened."

"That's what you said before. You let your damned pride get in the way, and everything got botched up. Now you're doing it again—and we'll both regret it. Can't you stop thinking about the outside world and just think of us—*the two of us*, with one life each, *loving each other*. Marya, I know we can come through this, and be happy. Why throw the chance away?"

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I left her soon afterwards, with nothing resolved. I hated to go, but she said she was tired and she looked so exhausted that I hadn't the heart to badger her any more. Not that there was much more to be said. I'd stressed all the things I could think of in mitigation of Raczinski's actions and I'd told her that whatever he'd done I didn't care. If that didn't heal her trauma, nothing would. Nothing, at least, that I could do.

I spent a treadmill of an evening, thinking about her. I couldn't get the picture of her out of my mind—sitting there in the flat, white and drawn, unbearably hurt, adamant in her proud isolation . . . I knew that I'd been *too* fair to Raczinski. No-one had the right to do what he'd done to Marya—not for any reason on earth. Nothing mattered more than a human relationship. What else *was* there?

I had a few drinks, and sank deeper into gloom. I went to bed and had a hellish night. In the morning I rang Marya from my room, but her phone didn't answer. I had some coffee sent up, which was all I could take. Presently the office rang and said that the editor wanted to see me at eleven.

At ten I rang Marya at her work, but she hadn't arrived. I guessed she was being deliberately elusive again. It was hopeless. I couldn't go on like this. I wasn't going to get anywhere with her—ever. She'd just have to go her own way.

The editor had said something about another foreign assignment. It was a good idea. I'd take it . . . Bitterly, I recalled that I had hoped to tell him of our engagement.

I bathed, and dressed, and at ten-thirty was on my way out of the hotel to keep my appointment: a page came over with a note on a tray. It was from Marya. A last goodbye?

I tore feverishly at the envelope. There was a single sheet of paper in it, with a single line of writing. It said, "Give me time, my darling. Please, please give me time."

I knew then that everything was going to be all right.

The Ashes of Loda © Andrew Garve 1964, 1965

Moscow Assignment is to be published in full as The Ashes of Loda by William Collins in April

SOLUTION TO TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD (PAGE 167)

ACROSS. 1, Conifer. 5, Tare. 7, Lag. 8, Asterisk. 9, Satin. 10, Rife. 13, Floe. 14, Alas. 18, Plot. 19, Revue. 21, Acid test. 22, Née. 23 Tree. 24, Seethed.

DOWN. 1, Colossal. 2, Nightcap. 3, Flaunt. 4, Retort. 5, Tariff. 6, Rose. 11, Eleventh. 12, Reverend. 15, Sledge. 16, Stress. 17, Writhe. 20, Scar

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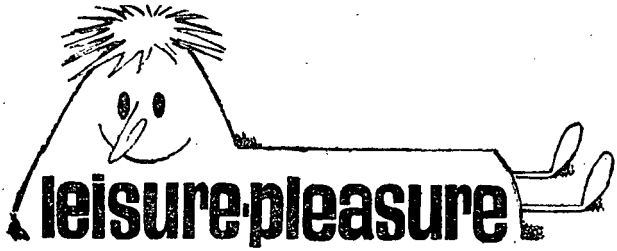
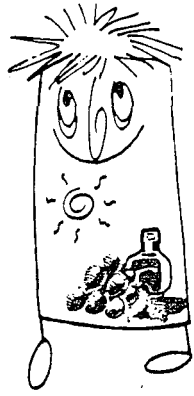


ANY good wine merchant will have on his shelves as many as 60 liqueurs—not including fruit brandies—such as Calvados, Kirsch, and Slivovitz, *et cetera*.

The majority of liqueurs follow a common form, even if they have very different flavours. In terms of alcoholic strength their rating is high—Green Chartreuse has a proof strength of 96 per cent—and so must be served in small glasses. Usually they are sweet and richly-flavoured. They are made by two methods; soaking fruit, spices or herbs in alcohol, or by distilling aromatic substances. In the case of several of them, the age-old recipes are still closely-guarded secrets.

Marie Brizard of Bordeaux, have been making liqueurs since 1775, when the original Marie started to sell Anisette, made from a recipe given to her by a West Indian whom she had nursed through an illness. Today the firm, like others, buys its ingredients from all over the world—aniseed from Spain, apricots from Perpignan, cocoa beans from Venezuela and so on.

The secret of success lies in the blending. In the distillation process, the basic fruit or herb is mixed with alcohol or brandy in a still and is then boiled. The vapours, which contain the aromatic essences, are cooled and condensed back into a spirit. In the maceration process the prepared fruit is steeped in the spirit for several months during which time it takes up the fruit flavours. It is then filtered and blended.



Certain liqueurs have clear and distinctive flavours: e.g. peppermint in Crème de Menthe; coffee in Tia Maria (which is made from a pure cane spirit and coffee beans); and caraway in

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Kummel. The aromatic liqueurs are harder to define: e.g. Benedictine, which is the most famous and perhaps the oldest, originally made in the Abbey at Fécamp; and Chartreuse, which has a flavour of angelica.

Cherries figure in a number of liqueurs. There is the straight cherry brandy such as Grants, made from the Morella fruit grown in Kentish orchards, and other brands made by Heerings in Denmark and Bols and de Kuyper in Holland. It is an interesting thought that while Francis Drake was sailing the Spanish Main, Lucas Bols was making liqueurs in Amsterdam. Kirsch, which is a fruit brandy, is made from wild black cherries from the Black Forest.

For those who like a less sweet liqueur, Apricot Bols is a sound choice. It should be served when slightly chilled. Drambuie, made in Scotland from whisky, honey and herbs, is a world-famous favourite. Glen Mist is another Scottish product. From Ireland, made from whiskey, there is Irish Mist. England's own liqueur is Brontë.

The cloying sweetness of some liqueurs can be reduced by serving them " on the rocks "; until recently this was regarded as heresy, but is now advocated by a leading French liqueur maker. Kummel, mixed in equal proportions with gin, and then chilled, goes down well, for the caraway and juniper blend admirably. Brandy and Benedictine are also a satisfactory mixture. Cordial Médoc, which is made from fruits from the South of France and blended with aromatic herbs, is reputed to have special digestive virtues.

La Trappistine, made by steeping herbs in Armagnac, is also unusual. It is the product of the monks of Grâce-Dieu who have taken a vow of silence—therefore no-one quite knows what they think of their own product!

Among the fruit brandies which, strictly, are not liqueurs but are often drunk at the end of the meal, Calvados, made in Normandy from distilled cider; is the best known. But, with the great increase in the number of summer visitors to Yugoslavia, Slivovitz, made from sweet blue plums, is also becoming well known.

Certain of the imported Polish vodkas—Wisniowka, Starka and Jarzebrak (which is flavoured with rowan berries)—can be drunk with pleasure at the end of the meal. As nearly all liqueurs are expensive, some very, much the cheapest and most satisfactory way of finding out which ones you like is to start with the miniature bottles.

J.B.W.

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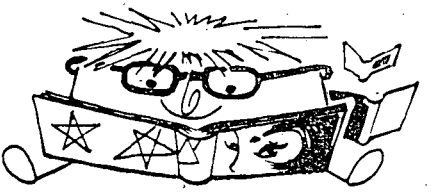
bookshelf



OUR favourite writer of suave suspense thrillers, William Haggard, has again added to his gallery of people it would be a pleasure to know, with His Highness Sheikh Ali bin Hasin bin Ibrahim. He is the reluctant ruler of a British protectorate, a small enough kingdom but with a hundred miles of coastline, and the only usable harbour for a complexity of pipelines bringing down oil.

Sheikh Ali's great grief is that only one out of his considerable entourage has the courage to beat him at chess, a game of which he is inordinately fond and at which he is good enough to know when he is beaten. Mostly he has to suffer silently when the moment comes for his opponent to make some flagrant and humiliating mistake which gives him the game.

The exception is his chauffeur Ernst, who is, alas, a dedicated and highly organised spy. But Ernst has lost his head over a woman. She is both elegant and provocative but she is also a princess, the Sheikh's half-sister and a Power behind his throne.

So Ernst has to be hurried out of the country on a thin pretext, and to England where his path, naturally, crosses that of our old and much admired friend, Colonel Charles Russell, head of Security Executive. (If author Haggard should ever try to retire or otherwise dispose of Russell this reviewer will murder him out of hand!).

Russell's problem is doubled, after an unsuccessful but spirited attempt on Ernst's part to spread alarm and confusion by murdering the Foreign Secretary.

An additional bedevilment is a departmental head fond of whisky, and a pompous resident Governor of the Sheikhdom which has become a flashpoint, dangerous to world peace. The fun really starts when the protagonists, including the sinister Ernst, all move back to the princess and the oil wells.

This one's called **The Powder Barrel,** and you'd be mad to miss it! (Cassell, 18s.)

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Author Howard Clewes himself lived and worked on a Brazilian ranch out in the wilds, the harsh setting of his latest novel, **Man On A Horse.** Its effective jacket pictures a hungry-looking vulture against an angry, blood-red sky, so the reader should have little doubt about what is before him. And how right he is!

The plot? Denis Cassell, director, and a sort of absentee landlord, comes out from England to visit his company's cattle ranch in the Mato Grosso. He brings his already hostile, socialite wife. Used to the humdrum and conventional living, they find themselves in a country of ugly realities, where most travel is on horseback over roadless land and most men carry guns and most cruelty is taken casually for granted.

Fabia, the wife, quickly seduces Hallam, the resident manager, and Cassell, persistently dogged by one misfortune after another, gets dangerously sick from the bite of a snake. Against every instinct he becomes entangled with pretty-boy José who nurses him and finally, raging with fever, and driven mad by the boy's continued pestering, he kills him.

There is a deadpan quality to Clewes' clever, clean prose which is especially effective in a drama as highly-coloured as this. The novel's only failure is its inability to involve one, except in a detached way, with its torn, unpleasant characters. They touch the mind, maybe, but never the heart.

(Jonathan Cape, 18s.)

Want a nice bloody murder? We have one. It's **Axe** by Ed McBain. The scene, as usual, is the 87th Precinct, and the cast includes Detectives Steve Carella, Meyer Meyer and Cotton Howes, old friends of ours. There is also an endearing band of octogenarians who call themselves the "Happy Kids."

Carella and his merry men have seldom been in more peril, or nearer sudden death than in their hunt for this killer, with his deadly weapon which he uses with such strength and accuracy.

The suspense and pace is terrific—one of Ed McBain's best.

(Hamish Hamilton, 15s.)

Still more gloom in the air! But while Erich Maria Remarque's **The Night in Lisbon** does nothing to bring cheer, it is tremendously readable, vividly evocative, and would be a mistake to miss.

We are back in the days of Hitler's war again, and bedevilled

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with the old familiar theme, man on the run. And this time we mind terribly what happens to him. Indeed, for sheer suspense alone this book would be difficult to put down unfinished. The plot is complicated, a story within a story as it were, but the heart of the matter is really its moving, tragic love theme.

What a long road Remarque has travelled since he shocked the world some twenty years back with "All Quiet on the Western Front." **The Night in Lisbon** is his most worthwhile book for some time.

(Hutchinson, 21s.)

A most unusual short novel by Nicholas Monsarrat opens his new series Signs of the Times. This is called **The Time Before This** and concerns itself with a disturbing picture of a man who finds his way through a wall of ice to come face to face with . . . but you must read it yourself.

(Pan Books, 2s. 6d.)

For a long railway journey as well as tremendous value for money comes **The Spring of Malice** by John Harris who became, deservedly, a world best-seller with "The Sea Shall Not Have Them."

Brimming with action, suspense and pleasingly leavened with sex, the action takes place in postwar Paris as a fanatical young "patriot" threatens to assassinate a visiting American general.

(Pan Books, 5s.)

Are you by chance an addict of that maddening absorbing business of pushing kings, queens, knights, castles and pawns into this square and that, and finding yourself continuously surprised by what happens to them? Then **The Pan Book Of Chess** by clever Mr. Gerald Abrahams is for you! What that man knows!

(New Pan Pipers, 3s. 6d.)

C. S. Forester introduces **Dreadnought** by Richard Hough, the most comprehensive history of the modern battleship ever written.

The hundreds of photographs which have been collected to illustrate this, are splendid in themselves and any man who has had anything to do with the sea, (and most men even if they haven't!) will want it.

(Michael Joseph, 70s.)

J.D.

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man about cars

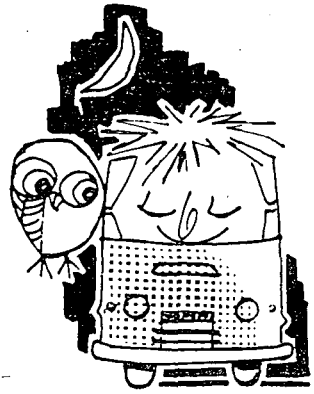
AFTER spending a week learning how to fold up small enough and low enough to sit in the driving seat of a popular sports car, I have just spent several weeks learning how to swing myself up into the driver's seat of a very different kind of motor.

Basically, this is a 15 cwt. Commer van fitted all round the outside with windows. and inside with most mod cons. The latter include sink, cooker, wardrobe, cupboards, four berths and seven seats. In fact, it's a self-contained moving house. The people who have transformed this van? Car Campers Ltd. of Coventry.

Powered by the 1½ litre engine which propels many of Rootes cars (including the Sunbeam Alpine), the Commer has not exactly a grand prix performance, but with liberal use of the gears, it is quite possible to keep up with a few of the Jones' and even to leave some behind. Yet this is not the most rewarding way of conducting this interesting vehicle.

Almost the first thing you notice as you settle into the very spacious driving area—six feet wide with room for three—is the fantastic view afforded by the deep, wide windscreen. In a few hours I had learned more about the local countryside than I had discovered in all my many years of previous driving. Hedges and banks don't obscure the view, blind corners are blind no longer and there is one unexpected bonus; the windscreen is too high up to be obscured by the spray from passing cars. For the same reason, headlamp dazzle at night is much less of a problem.

Top speed is around 67 m.p.h. but on a slight downhill gradient or with a following wind, it is possible to achieve quite high speeds. Coming across Salisbury Plain late at night, building up into the seventies was rather like flying very low, an impression heightened by the view of the tops of several cars as we sped by. Generally, a cruising speed of 50 to 55 m.p.h. is the most pleasant way to travel.



Road holding is good for a vehicle of this type. Once you become accustomed to the rather

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strange feeling of sitting directly over the steering wheel with no bonnet to aim, corners can be negotiated quite briskly. Hills call for plenty of left arm work and it proved essential to keep the engine revving quite hard, for once revs drop, the engine loses most of its urge, which is not surprising considering the load it pulls.

Most of the test was conducted during a trip overland from Dieppe across to Switzerland, through Northern Italy into Yugoslavia, down the coast road to Dubrovnik, then inland and back through Austria, Germany and Belgium—covering every conceivable kind of road surface.

Petrol consumption worked out at around 21 m.p.g. which included two separate days flat-out motoring on the Autobahns, stopping only once every 100 miles to change drivers. Also there was an enormous amount of mountain motoring and driving for long periods in third gear because of bad roads.

Most important, brakes stood up well.

The great advantage of a motor caravan is that it is possible to stop anywhere at all and cook a meal or brew coffee, or if in a hurry, sandwiches can be made by someone in the rear while navigator and driver concentrate on motoring.

Once at rest on a camp site or in some quiet wayside place the Car Camper really comes into its own. The roof is easily pushed up to allow standing room. With the travelling seats folded away and the dinette put in place there is still a large area of floor for the cook and bottle-washer. Once the evening meal has been cleared away, it is a simple matter to prepare the beds for the night.

Well and quite tastefully finished, the Car Camper series IIIB provides a lot in a comparatively small space and at a starting price of around £947 10s. (there is a good range of extras including a fridge), and no purchase tax, it makes a fascinating alternative to the average family saloon. **K.F.**

"HELL," SAID THE DUCHESS...

Readers will remember our competition in January Argosy, when we challenged you to invent an irresistible opening for a story. Our judges, pleased, amused and sometimes baffled by entries from all over the world, are awarding the £5 prize to J. Morton Elvidge of Dundee who suggested:

"What are you doing in my bath," said the colonel,
"and playing with my pink plastic duck?"
"I'm from the Ministry," she said...

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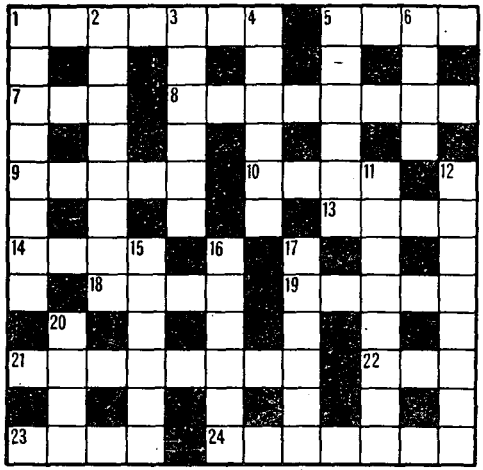
TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Fir-cone (anag.) (7).
5 Biblical weed (4).
7 Convict (3).
8 Star for reference (8).
9 Rich cloth (5).
10 Prevalent (4).
13 Icy sheet (4).
14 Woe is me! (4).
18 Conspiracy (4).
19 Satirical show? (5).
21 Trying time (4, 4).
22 Born a lady? (3).
23 Popular bird sanctuary! (4).
24 Bubbled over (7).



DOWN

1 Huge (8).
2 Imbibed before bed! (8).
3 Show off (6).
4 Distilling vessel (6).
5 List of duties? (6).
6 Flower came up (4).
11 Last to bat? (8).
12 Address the clergyman (8).
15 Winter transport (6).
16 Emphasis (6).
17 Squirm (6).
20 Where the wound was (4).

(Solutions on page 159)

ANSWERS TO THE QUIZ ON PAGE 73

1. Everton and Exeter City. 2. Fifteen.
3. A Saab. 4. Cypress Gardens, Florida, U.S.A.
5. The race for the Doggett's Coat and Badge.
6. The American, Maurice McLoughlin who, although born in Nevada, was known as "The Californian Comet."
7. Tommy Burns, born Noah Brusso in Canada. The fight took place at Sydney, Australia, on Boxing Day, 1908, Johnson winning in the 14th round by a knockout.
8. The phrase used in those circumstances is "a pair of spectacles."
9. 3 minutes, 59.4 seconds.
10. (a) Golf. (b) Badminton. (c) Table Tennis.

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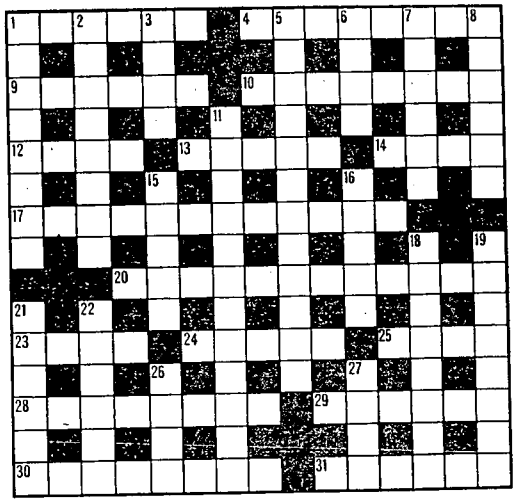
ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution next month



ACROSS

1 "As full of —— as the month of May" (*Henry IV, I*) (6).

4 Distinctive flag (8).

9 Business as usual? (6).

10 Spouting figurehead? (8).

12 A measure of control? (4).

13 Verbally best! (5).

14 May soon be nameless? (4).

17 Sportsman has his faults, of course (6-6).

20 Mason's work (4, 8).

23 He's after 9 (4).

24 Short cut to boundary, often (5).

25 Stupid fellow (4).

28 Beauty expert? (8).

29 Under cover activities! (6).

30 Appropriate hit? (3, 5).

31 Incentive for donkey (6).

DOWN

1 Bond concerns MI5! (8).

2 Lines not given for being rude (8).

3 This is the Age of Cruelty (4).

5 Picture for clarity (12).

6 Nearly dark (4).

7 Tom, Dick and Harry? (6).

8 Colourful craft (6).

11 Exchange views in forgery case? (7, 5).

15 Pure and Simple? (5).

16 "The —— done, the undone vast" (Browning) (5).

18 Political cry? Strike repeatedly (8).

19 How petitioners court trouble? (3, 3, 2).

21 Star in race under force? (6).

22 Not in group at the beginning (6).

26 In Genesis he made sail (4).

27 Coin's reverse is the same (4).

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Yorkshire's Young Ones . . . . . No. 6

Timothy Philip, has Simon's nose, Clare's eyes, and the family common sense

Mother and baby are doing well. There will be plenty of advice from the family of course, but Simon, aware of his increased responsibilities, has already decided to share these with the "Yorkshire". He has seen Mr. Newstead, the Local Manager about adjusting his insurances—and providing a policy for Timothy Philip.

Endowment Assurance will provide a cash sum to meet anticipated expenses in the future. Such a Policy taken out at the birth of a child, can mature when he is ready for University or is embarking on his chosen career. As an alternative, there is Child's Deferred Assurance which provides a cash sum or a Life Policy at very low cost when your child reaches the age of 21. See *your* Local Branch Manager who will tell you why. . . .

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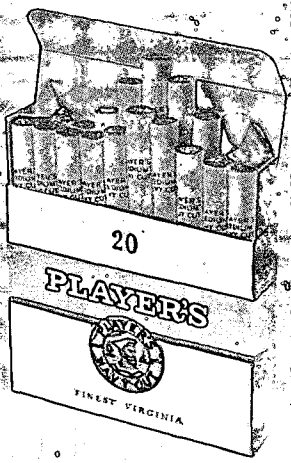
When you put pleasure first,
you find that of all cigarettes
only Player's please so much



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